

In Focus



Quarterly Newsletter for Continuous Quality Improvement

July 2005 Issue

From the Director's Desk: *I am encouraged by the steady improvement we have seen in timely initiation of contact on CA/Ns. This newsletter will highlight some circuits which have made improvement in this area and discuss strategies they used to do so. This quarter, an additional data element and important aspect of our work is introduced for your consideration, visitation and its effect on timely reunification. Take a moment in your CQI meetings to review your circuit's performance on this measure and strategize how you can contribute to improving this outcome for children and families.*

-Frederic M. Simmens

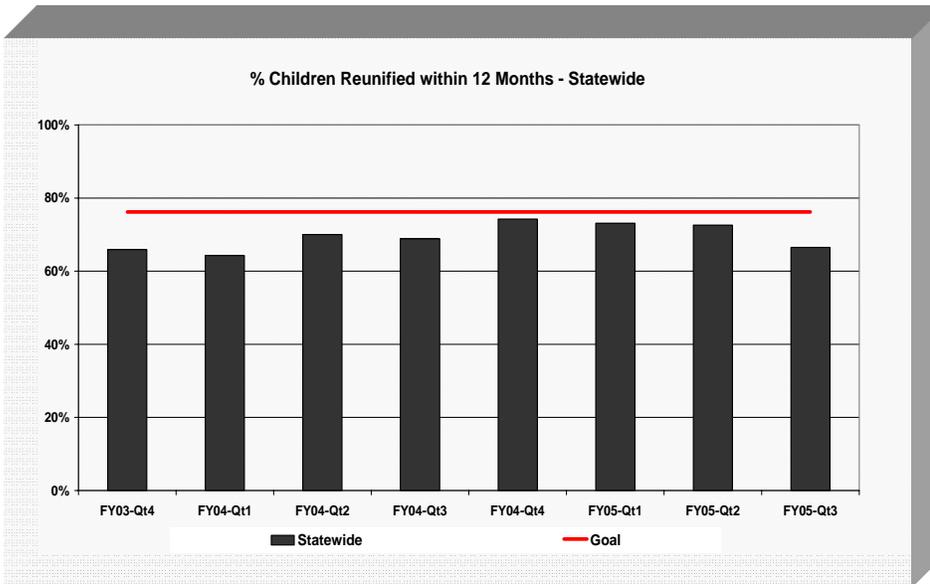
Visitation Matters

According to the Federal Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) and Council on Accreditation (COA), visitation is an integral part of our social work practice, especially with regard to timely reunification. The combined CFSR results (2001-2004) illustrated a link exists between timely reunification and regular and frequent case manager visits with children, parents, parent-child visits, sibling visits, and services to children, parents, and foster parents. For children in foster care, visitation serves to maintain consistency and stability, as well as preserve vital family connections. It is well documented in research that reunification is much more likely to occur if a child's family connections are encouraged and supported.

Visitation can distress many children and parents who may re-experience the pain of separation and reunion before, during and after the visits. Foster parents may also feel grief, anger, powerlessness, burn out, and experience secondary trauma. Therefore, visits should focus on fun and cultivating the parent-child relationship. Case managers can best promote this focus by providing support through regular home visits with children, parents and foster parents.

The environment of parent-child visits should be home-like, emotionally supportive, and allow parents to be involved in their children's lives. Visiting in parents' homes and foster homes is preferable to visits at an agency or fast food restaurant.

A positive relationship between the parent and the supervisor (of the visit) is essential. A written visitation plan, prepared in advance and containing input from everyone, including foster parents, should specify activities and ritual greetings and goodbyes. Education and training supplied to foster parents will enable them to assume a substantial role in the visitation process and to function as an important source of support to both parents and children. Foster parents should also be encouraged to interact with parents, and become involved in the parent-child visits.



The columns in the chart above indicate the statewide average over the last eight quarters for the percentage of children achieving reunification within twelve months. The state goal is 76.2% as indicated by the horizontal red line. Click on [Circuit Charts for the Percentage of Children Reunified within 12 Months](#) to see a chart which shows how your circuit has performed on this measure in comparison to the statewide average and goal. The above data is derived from Measure #10 of the Quarterly Outcomes Report.

CQI ACTIVITY CALENDAR

July 2005					August 2005					September 2005				
Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri
				1	1	2	3	4	5				1	2
4	5	6	7	8	8	9	10	11	12	5	6	7	8	9
11	12	13	14	15	15	16	17	18	19	12	13	14	15	16
18	19	20	21	22	22	23	24	25	26	19	20	21	22	23
25	26	27	28	29	29	30	31			26	27	28	29	30

■	1 st Level CQI
■	2 nd Level CQI
■	3 rd Level CQI
■	State Level
■	Peer Record

Accreditation Corner

COA Standards on Visitation

G1.4.01

All service plans for children or youth in out-of-home care specify visitation arrangements, unless contra-indicated, including location and frequency, and all children and adults in out-of-home care have the right to:

- visit their family in their family's home;
- receive visits from family and friends; and
- have telephone conversations with family members, as appropriate to the service plan.

S21.7.02

The organization makes intensive efforts to engage biological parents in continuing contacts with their child, whether through visitation, phone, or written correspondence, and works to implement permanency plans except when:

- contra-indicated by the law, court finding, the child's safety, or the child's best interests;
- parental rights are terminated; or
- the biological parent's declining health precludes such efforts.

Interpretation (S21.7.02):

In some situations, engagement of the parents can still occur even when they are in declining health or when rights have been terminated. The standard requires engagement of parents whenever possible.

S21.25

Each child served in kinship care is:

- encouraged to maintain contact with his/her biological parents, and provided support regarding parental contact, unless specifically contra-indicated by safety concerns;
- provided with information about biological parents' activities and progress towards family reunification or other permanency options;
- prepared to return to parents' care or another permanent arrangement including adoption or guardianship by kin;
- provided with help in maintaining relationships with siblings through visits and shared activities wherever possible; and
- helped to address intrafamily conflicts and issues of family separation and loss.

S21.26.01

The organization actively helps biological parents to:

- understand and address separation and loss issues;
- redefine roles and relational boundaries;
- visit and maintain contact with their child;
- overcome barriers to their involvement in the child's care or visitation; and
- use organizational and community resources to prepare the family for reunification or other permanency options for the child.

For further Accreditation updates go to:

http://dssweb/cs/priority_tracking/accreditation/index.htm



CQI SUCCESSES!!

More successes through CQI:

22nd Circuit:

- Establishment of a front line inter-agency committee which meets monthly and includes representatives from the Family Court, Children's Division SSS I's, CSW's and Voices for Children. This committee will mirror the work of the state interagency committee.
- The South Broadway office parking lot was expanded for staff so they would not have to park on the street where break-ins were occurring.

32nd Circuit: A parking spot was designated for foster parents so they can easily drop off and pick up foster children for visits.

33rd Circuit: OJT training was developed, systems furniture was obtained and Mississippi Co received a brand new copier for their office.

34th Circuit: Workers are going to a four day workweek and using flex time.

35th Circuit: Investigators received cell phones, car seats were obtained for transportation and workers received business cards. In Stoddard Co, a new phone system was obtained so families would not get busy signals when calling the office.

36th Circuit: An interview room was obtained by the Children's Division staff.

37th Circuit: Cell phones were obtained for on call workers.

24th Circuit: Voicemail was obtained and the intake schedule was re-examined.

42nd Circuit: Voicemail was obtained.

State Level CQI Meeting Minutes

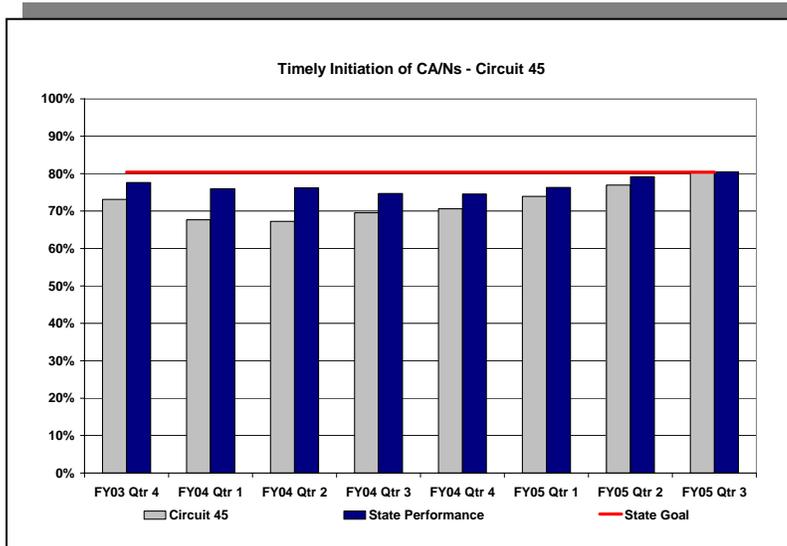
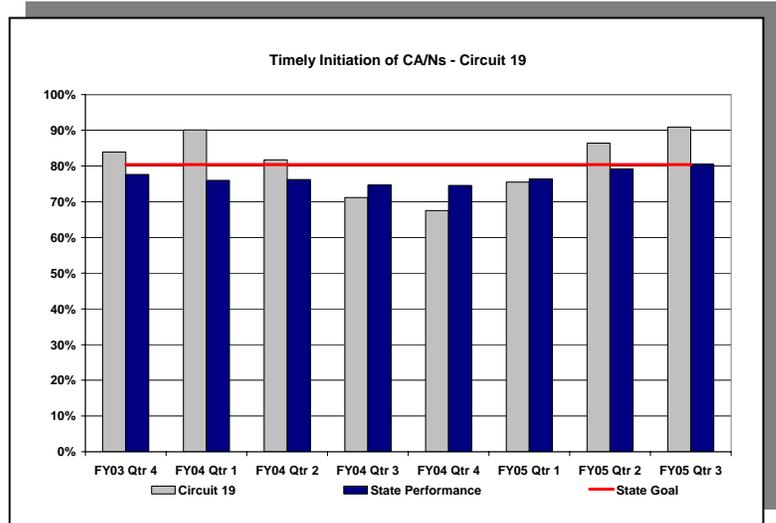
Click on this link, [State Level CQI Minutes](#), to see what was discussed during the first quarter State Level CQI Team Meeting on June 16th.

CIRCUIT KUDOS

Last quarter staff were asked to examine timely initiation of CA/Ns and timely PPRTs during their CQI meetings. This quarter we would like to recognize some circuits which have made steady or dramatic improvements in these two areas.

Timely Initiation of CA/Ns

Circuit 19, Cole County, has steadily and dramatically improved on this outcome (see chart at right). The Circuit Manager, Ellie Little stated that although they did reexamine their intake protocol and this has helped, the circuit's improvement can really be attributed to the Investigative Supervisor, Wanda Crocker, and the investigative staff in Cole County. With the addition of a new investigative position, Wanda's monitoring, and the unit's diligence, Cole County is raising the bar for performance in this area. Keep up the good work!



When Debbie Hinrichs of the **45th Circuit** became Circuit Manager in April 2003, she was aware that timely initiation was an area which needed improvement. She discussed the low stats with staff and made a plan for improvement which consisted of the CA/N supervisor reviewing every CA/N and assuring several attempts were made to make contact with the victim within 24 hours. Staff were open to change, are more accountable now, and wanted to make improvement. Debbie and her staff continue to discuss this outcome and always keep it in mind. Staff deserve the credit as they have wanted to improve and were open to changing practice - and it shows in the numbers (see chart at left)!

Circuit 35, consisting of Dunklin and Stoddard County, showed the most improvement on timely initiation of CA/Ns in the southern region. In Quarter 1 of FY 2005, they were at 76.79% and steadily rose to 91.00% in the third quarter. This is a remarkable **14.21% increase** in this outcome. Staff attribute their success to new staffing allocations and the development of a temporary after hours rotation of staff whom typically did not do investigations. Additionally, one staff member volunteered to help out before her maternity leave. Their teamwork has paid off and safety of children has improved.

Timely PPRTs

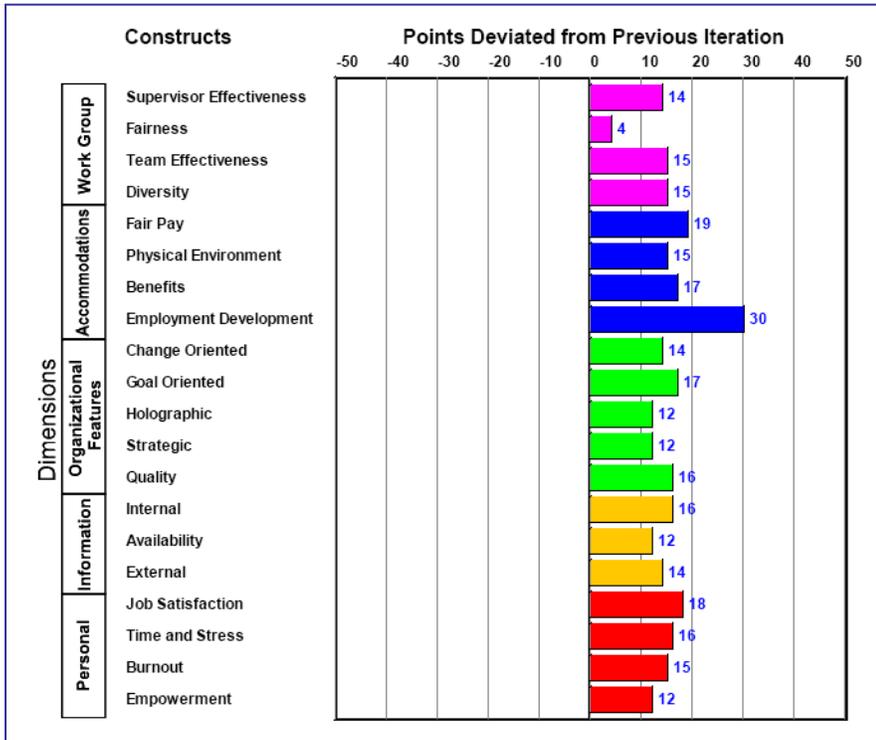
The **37th Circuit's** performance on timely PPRTs steadily improved from 63.55% in Quarter 1 of FY 2005 to 87.80% in Quarter 3 of FY 2005....this was a **24.25% increase!** The Circuit Manager, Pat Witham, attributes this to an increased focus on entering SS-61s in a more timely manner. This is also being emphasized by the Children's Services Specialist, Cindy Moses, in her OJT. What a difference updating the SS-61s has made. Keep up the good work!

SURVEY SAYS...

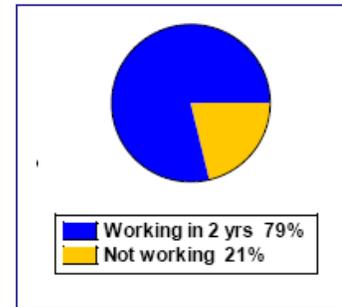
70% Response Rate to the Survey of Organizational Excellence

The results of the all staff survey are in and the response rate to the Survey of Organizational Excellence was a stunning **70%**! Several factors contributed to this turnout. One was the commitment of the Quality Assurance Specialists to getting staff involved. Congratulations to Pam Alston, Quality Assurance Specialist in the southeastern part of the state. Her region had a response rate increase of more than 3.5% over last year. Another factor related to the record

breaking response was the commitment of regional and state office leadership. However, the most important factor in the increased response rate was the commitment of the Children's Division staff. Because of your participation, we have an enormous amount of information about staff perceptions of our organization. This information will be used in numerous ways over the course of the next year.



Statewide results indicate an increase over last year in staff perceptions in all areas of the organization (see chart left).



In addition to improved perceptions and response rate, there was also a 2% increase in staff's intent to stay with the Children's Division in two years (see chart above).

A full summary on the SOE will be forthcoming. To see all of the Survey of Organizational Excellence results go to <http://dssweb/cs/soe/index.shtml>.

Power of Prevention

The Early Childhood and Prevention Services section was busy in June preparing their biennial Child Care and Development (CCDF) state plan. They are required to submit the state plan to the federal Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families in order to receive the federal funding to support our child care subsidy and quality services programs. As part of the state plan process, representatives of the Early Childhood and Prevention Services section, in coordination with Departments of Health and Senior Services and Elementary and Secondary Education, conducted public hearings throughout the state. Seven hearings were held in Kansas City, St. Joseph, St. Louis, Cape Girardeau, West Plains, Springfield and Columbia. Over 200 individuals, interested in early childhood services in the state, were in attendance. The public hearing process provided a forum for state departments to learn from the early childhood field what it is that is working well, what areas need to be improved and how programs might be expanded to better serve our children and families in the field of early childhood care and education. A draft of the Child Care and Development Fund may be found on the Department of Social Services, Children's Division web site at www.dss.mo.gov/cd/childcare/ccdplan.htm.

CHILDREN'S DIVISION MISSION STATEMENT

To partner with families, communities and government to protect children from abuse and neglect and assure safety, permanency and well being for Missouri's children.