



Office of Children and Family Services

KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

SHEILA POOLE
Commissioner

3-21-2022

Stacy Alvord, Commissioner
Oswego County Department of Social Services
100 Spring Street, PO Box 1320
Mexico, NY 13114

Dear Commissioner Alvord:

The New York State Office of Children and Family Services is charged with providing oversight, monitoring and technical assistance to local department of social services for safety, permanency, and wellbeing of children within the care of the counties. The Office of Children and Family Services' Division of Child Welfare and Community Services, Oversight and Monitoring Unit conducted a review of Child Protective Services (CPS), Preventive Services and Foster Care records from Oswego County Department of Social Services (OCDSS) in December 2021. The purpose of the review was to assess the agency for compliance with laws, regulations, and good standards of practice towards achieving positive outcomes for youth and their families. The results of the record review were issued on March 2, 2022.

Some identified strengths in practice included:

- Gathering case related information to make safety, risk, and determination decisions in CPS cases
- Planning with families around safety and risk in CPS cases
- Assessing and addressing identified needs of mothers and involving mothers in case planning during open Preventive Services cases
- Gathering case related information to assess safety and risk in Foster Care cases
- Assessing the needs of children, mothers, and foster parents in Foster Care cases
- Involving children, mothers, and fathers in case planning in Foster Care cases
- Providing services to maintain relationships with children, parents, and siblings in Foster Care cases

Some areas needing improvement are:

- Documenting CPS history checks within the regulatory timeframe in the CPS case record
- Documenting all safety factors in the determination safety assessment in the CPS case record
- Conducting initial and ongoing risk and safety assessments during Preventive Services cases
- Initial and ongoing assessment of the needs of children and fathers and provision of their services in Preventive Services cases
- Involving children and fathers in case planning of Preventive Services cases
- Appropriately addressing safety concerns when they arise in Foster Care cases
- Permanency goals established and achieved timely in Foster Care cases
- Initial and ongoing assessments and service delivery to meet needs of fathers Foster Care cases

The Syracuse Regional Office and OCDSS staff will meet on March 22, 2022, to discuss the findings and work together to develop a Program Improvement Plan to address those areas that need improvement. As part of this process OCFS has had preliminary conversations with your agency to explore efforts and strategies already being undertaken to improve practice and services to children and families. Some strategies OCDSS

has already implemented or plan to implement are: amending the protocol to include medical neglect cases being referred to the Multi-Disciplinary Team; developing a Drug Endangered Children Multi-Disciplinary Team; collaboration with the Family Court to support court involved families struggling with drug addiction; request for more staff to increase training, internal oversight and quality assurance of case practice; request for a nursing services position to better support casework staff when managing cases involving children with medical needs.

Additionally, after our meeting on 3/22/22, if there are further technical assistance or training needs identified we are happy to assist in getting your staff what is needed.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sara J. Simon".

Sara J. Simon, Syracuse Regional Office Director