

NEBRASKA

Good Life. Great Mission.

DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



Pete Ricketts, Governor

September 15, 2021

Patrick O'Donnell, Clerk of the Legislature
State Capitol, Room 2018
P.O. Box 94604
Lincoln, NE 68509

Dear Mr. O'Donnell,

Pursuant to Nebraska Revised Statute §43-4408 the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services (CFS), is submitting this report regarding the performance of the lead agency contractor Saint Francis Ministries, for ongoing child welfare case management in the Eastern Service Area including Douglas and Sarpy counties during state fiscal year 2021.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephanie Beasley".

Stephanie L. Beasley
Director
Division of Children and Family Services

Section I: Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Framework

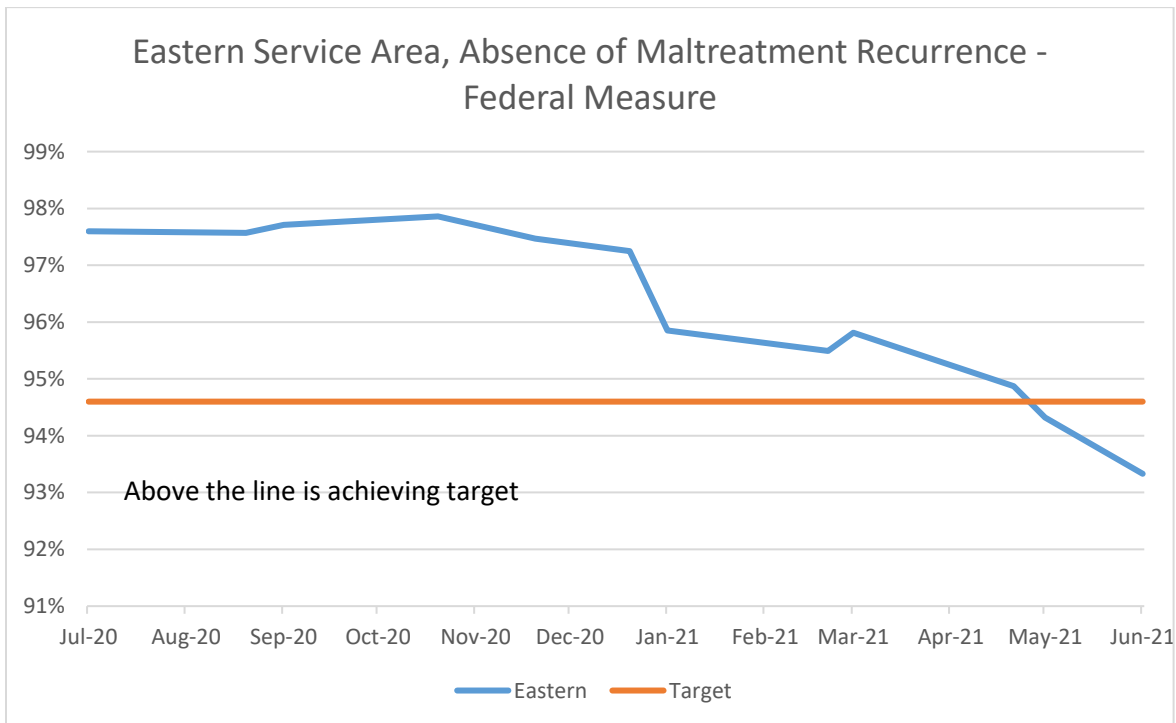
The Division of Children and Family Services (CFS) continues to monitor and improve the performance and outcomes derived from the lead agency by using a continuous quality improvement (CQI) framework. Nebraska's CQI system utilizes a team approach to assess performance by continually measuring, analyzing, providing feedback, controlling, and ultimately improving outcomes for the children and families served in the Eastern Service Area (ESA). The CFS quality assurance team works independently and collaboratively with the lead agency, Saint Francis Ministries (SFM). Saint Francis Ministries also has an internal team dedicated to CQI. CFS provides Saint Francis Ministries all known calculated performance and outcome data. Extensive ESA case specific data is also made available to Saint Francis Ministries via the CFS Bi-Portal to accommodate Saint Francis Ministries' internal data analysis efforts.

Below are various Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Round 2 federal outcome measures of safety, permanency and well-being.

Outcome 1: Safety

Children are protected from abuse and neglect, in the safety of their homes.

Indicator 1a: Absence of Maltreatment Recurrence –Saint Francis Ministries will continue to maintain 94.6% absence of maltreatment recurrence during the state fiscal year ending June 30, 2021 (Federal Measure).

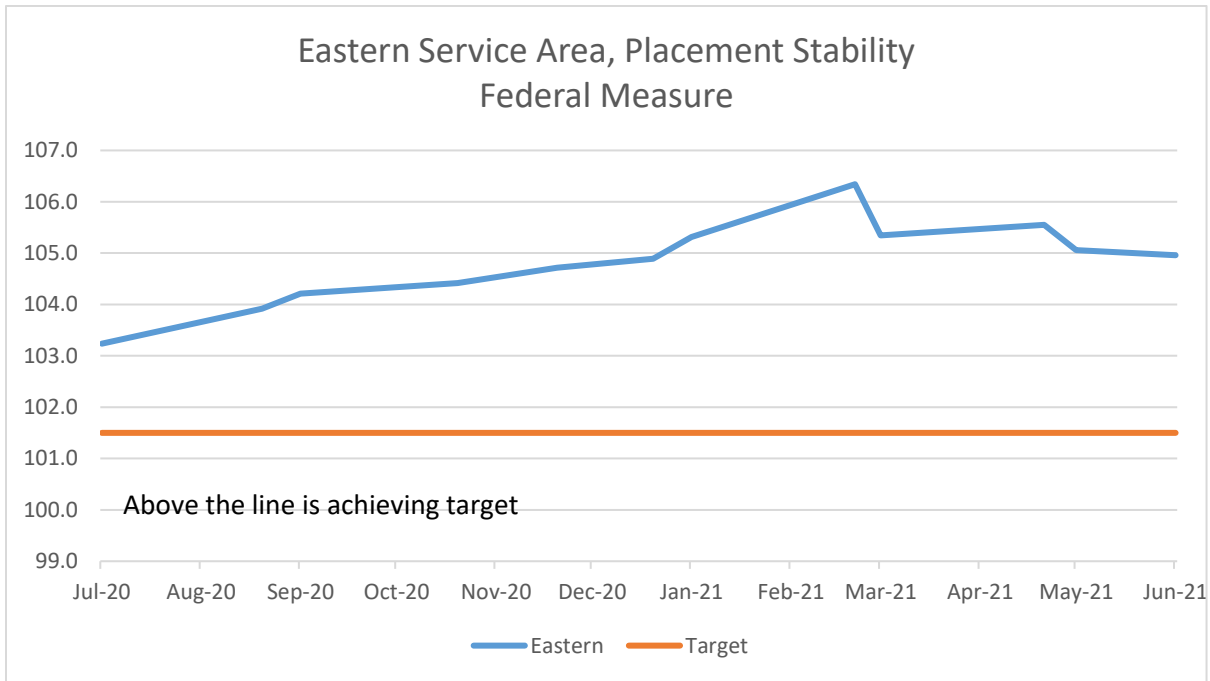


The Absence of Maltreatment Recurrence measure has declined during the year. Because of COVID-19 quarantine guidance and practice, many children were doing a version on on-line schooling causing them to have limited visibility to mandated reporters. During the COVID-19 pandemic, reporting of abuse was considerably low in not only Nebraska, but also child welfare systems across the country. From January 2021 to June 2021, children began returning to in-person school and other community activities making them once again more visible to mandated reporters increasing the likelihood of a substantiated report of maltreatment. This caused a steady decline in the Absence of Maltreatment Recurrence.

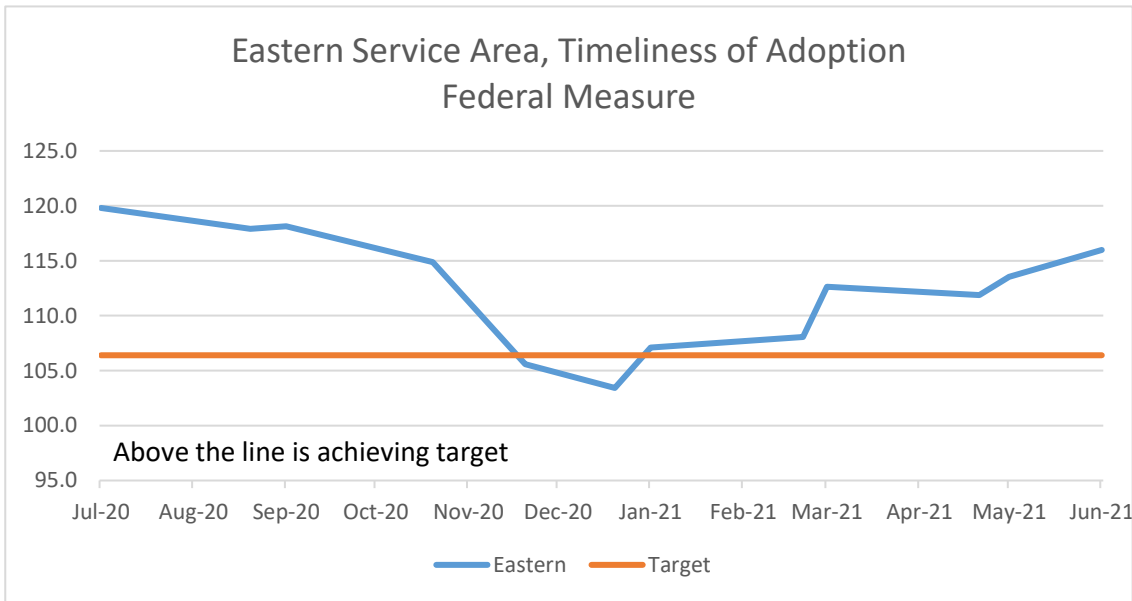
Outcome 2: Permanency

Children will experience stability and permanency.

Indicator 2a: Placement Stability – Saint Francis Ministries will continue to maintain a 101.5 placement stability composite score for children in care during the SFY ending June 30, 2021 (Federal Measure).

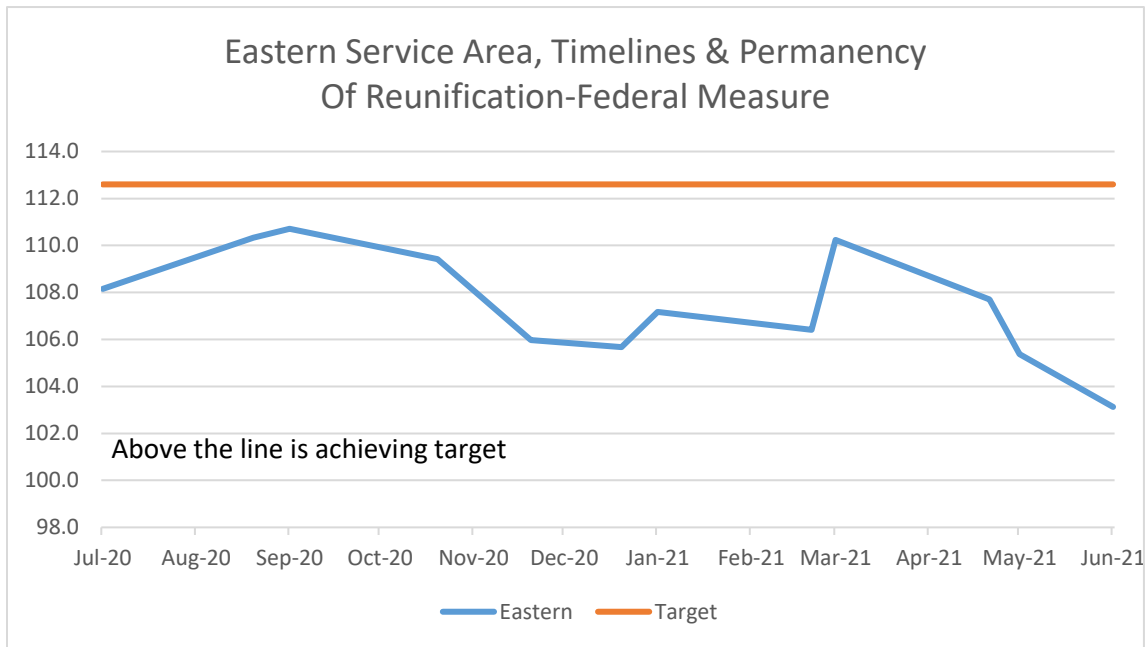


Indicator 2b: Timeliness of Adoption –Saint Francis Ministries will continue to maintain a 106.4 composite score for timeliness of adoption for children in care during the SFY ending June 30, 2021 (Federal Measure).



From July to December 2020, there was a decrease in the Timeliness of Adoptions, but beginning in January 2021, there is a gradual increase. Calendar Year 2020 had 186 fewer adoptions statewide compared to calendar year 2019. There could be many reasons for the drop. While the data does not provide any specific details for reasoning, we can deduce known factors. During COVID 19, several courts were not operating at full capacity or operated in a virtual state, which may have resulted in some docket scheduling that would have had a direct impact on adoptions. With several unknown factors of COVID-19 during this time, there was a decline in the number of families expressing interest in adoption. If a child and/or someone in the potential adoptive home was exposed to COVID or positive, there would be a delay with the Adoption Home Study as the child and/or someone in the potential adoptive home would have been quarantined, which would cause delays in the adoption process. While there are more children awaiting adoption than available homes, all of our teams across the state, including the Eastern Service Area, continue to enhance recruitment efforts. The ultimate goal of DHHS and its contracted vendors always is to ensure Nebraska’s children are safe and that each child has a forever home that is able to provide the proper support and well-being.

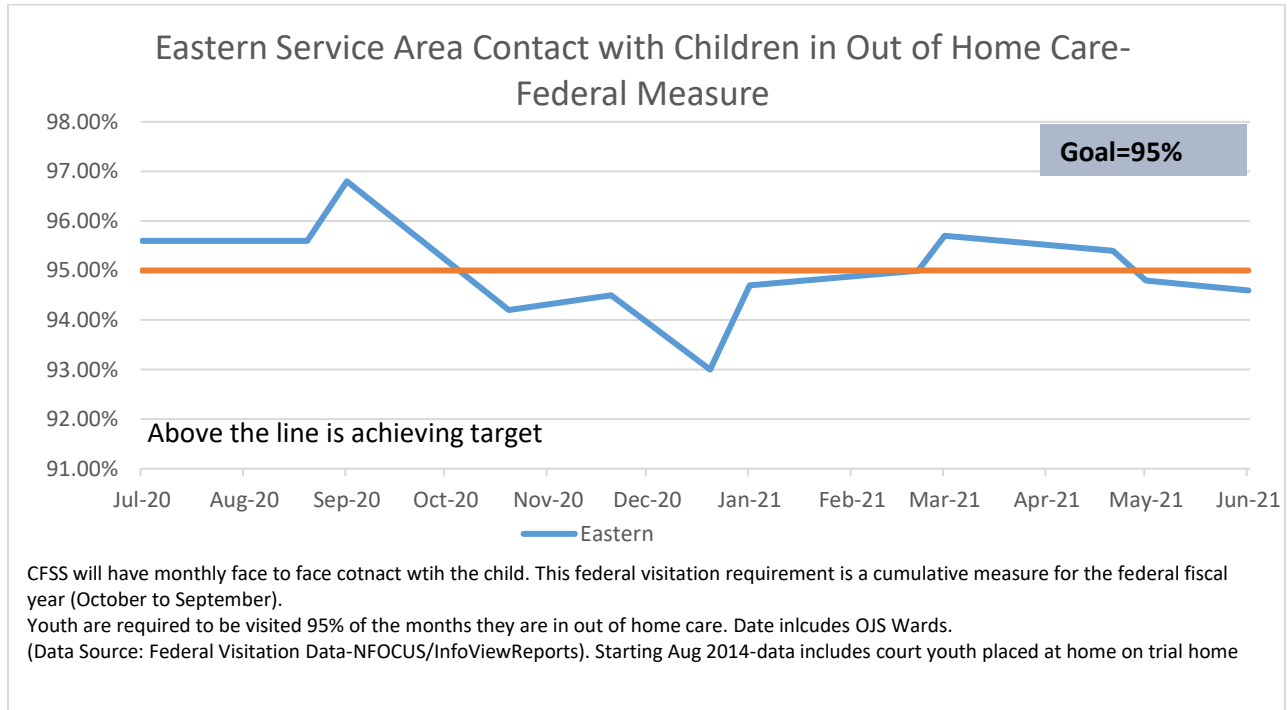
Indicator 2c: Timeliness of Reunification – Saint Francis Ministries will achieve a 122.6 composite score for timeliness of reunification for children in care by June 30, 2021 (Federal Measure).



Outcome 3: Well-Being

Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

Indicator 3a: Case manager's visit with children in out-of-home care: Saint Francis Ministries will visit face-to-face with children a minimum of one time each month 95% of the time (Federal Measure).



The Nebraska Quality Assurance team completes quarterly Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) case reviews. The reviews are completed using the Federal CF SR Round 3 Children and Family Services Review tool. These case reviews are required to measure the State's progress toward achievement of the goals contained within the Federal CF SR Program Improvement Plan (PIP).

Approximately 30 Eastern Service Area cases are randomly selected for review each calendar quarter. The case reviews consist of 18 focus areas designed to assess case management activities according to the Federal/State statutes & CFS policies. Ten of the 18 items are included in the 2019 CF SR PIP. The federally mandated PIP items include items 1-6 and items 12-15.

The following table illustrates the recent and historical results for CF SR Program Improvement Plan items in the Eastern Service Area. Each item represents case management processes within a defined safety, permanency and well-being outcome/group.

Children and Family Services Review (CFSR)

Eastern Service Area

	PIP Quarter 2	PIP Quarter 3	PIP Quarter 4	PIP Quarter 5	PIP Quarter 6	PIP Quarter 7	PIP Quarter 8	
Review Months	Jul, Aug & Sep 2019	Oct, Nov & Dec 2019	Jan, Feb, March 2020	Apr, May, Jun 2020	Jul, Aug, Sep 2020	Oct-Dec 2020	Jan-Mar 2020	
Period Under Review	July 2018 to Sep 2018	October 2018 to Dec 2020	Jan 2019 to March 2020	Apr 2019- June 2020	July 2019- Sep 2020	October 2019 to December 2020	January 2020 to March 2021	
Number of Cases	37	34	34	35	32	30	32	Target
Item 1: Timeliness of Initiating Investigations	85.20%	81.00%	61.10%	66.70%	77.80%	82.40%	82.40%	84%
Item 2: Services to Family to Protect Children in home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry	100%	84.60%	91.70%	88.20%	90.00%	90.00%	77.80%	85%
Item 3: Risk and Safety Assessment and Management	83.80%	85.30%	79.40%	60%	90.60%	66.70%	75.00%	80%
Item 4: Stability of Foster Care Placement	66.70%	85%	57.90%	60%	77.80%	70.60%	83.30%	83%
Item 5: Permanency Goal for Child	57.10%	50%	36.80%	75%	50%	58.80%	55.60%	66%
Item 6: Achieving Permanency	38.10%	20%	21.10%	50%	22.20%	41.20%	44.40%	52%
Item 12: Needs and Services	51.40%	67.70%	50.00%	28.60%	40.60%	53.30%	43.80%	55%
Item 13: Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning	66.70%	85.30%	59.40%	62.90%	62.50%	60.00%	54.80%	83%
Item 14: Caseworker Visits With Child	75.70%	64.70%	70.60%	62.90%	78.10%	83.30%	62.50%	84%
Item 15: Caseworker Visits With Parents	63.60%	63.30%	51.90%	57.60%	65.60%	69.00%	57.10%	68%

Section II: Contract Monitoring and Accountability

A. Communication and Feedback

Type of Feedback	Participants	Frequency	Purpose
Local Operations Meeting	Local CFS staff and Saint Francis Ministries Program Staff	Bi-Monthly	To review outcome data from the continuous quality improvement reports specific to ESA. Data analysis leads to strategy / action steps developed for formation of workgroups to further data analysis and data drill down. Operational processes reviewed and revised as needed.
Management Meeting	CFS Eastern Service Area Administrator and Saint Francis Ministries Regional Vice President	Monthly	Discussion and resolution regarding programmatic or contract issues. Review of questions and clarification on contractual roles/responsibilities. Discussion and action on community efforts needed with providers and other stakeholders.
Monthly Data Share	Data share	Monthly	Sharing of CFS generated data reports of various outcome measures and data.
Legal Calls	CFS/Saint Francis Ministries leadership and legal staff	Monthly	Monthly conference call to discuss any legal issues in the ESA and strategies to address.
Calls with County Attorneys	CFS/leadership and lead county attorneys for Douglas and Sarpy counties	Monthly	Monthly conference call to discuss any court issues in the ESA and strategies to address.
Provider Meetings	Saint Francis Ministries program staff and CFS program staff and Providers	Bi-Monthly	Meeting with providers in Saint Francis Ministries network to address foster care issues and service needs.
ESA Contract Monitoring Team	ESA contract monitoring team and Saint Francis Ministries Program Staff	Daily	CFS staff respond to grievances and concerns voiced by families, children, judicial and legal parties to ensure quality and compliance to SDM models and CFS policy.
Assessment Team Meeting	CFS local program staff and Saint Francis Ministries program staff	Monthly	Review of new out-of-home assessments and concerns with foster care homes. Develop coordinated action plans.

Daily Intake/Transfer Call	CFS program staff and Saint Francis Ministries program staff	Daily as needed	Review of any new intake on an open case and/or any case ready for transfer to Saint Francis Ministries. Develop specific role and responsibility tasks for each agency.
Daily Huddle Calls	CFS/Saint Francis Ministries leadership huddle calls	Daily or as needed	Review any case management issues, policy issues, practice issues. Communications from CFS Central Office.
Quality Assurance Reviews	CFS CQI team	Monthly	Review of random sampling of cases and feedback back to Saint Francis Ministries staff of case management accolades or concerns. Quarterly CQI meetings with Saint Francis Ministries staff and administration.

B. Compliance Reviews - Compliance reviews continue to be conducted. The chart below identifies the type of review and the dates on-site reviews were completed.

Type of Review	Date of On-Site Reviews
Personnel File Review- On-Site Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sept 30, 2019 100% Compliance • Dec 5, 2019 90% Compliance • Mar 31, 2020 88% Compliance* • June 25, 2020 80% Compliance*
	*The files from Saint Francis Ministries were missing E-verify form but included a Social Security Administration document. Corrective action was implemented: % above indicates compliance of personnel files excluding E-verify forms.

C. Process and Outcome Measures

CFS continues to monitor the lead agency’s performance utilizing Process and Outcome Measures.

Process Measures	Frequency of Review	Forum
Family Team Meetings 1 x every 90 days	Monthly/Quarterly	Monthly data share/Quarterly meeting
Contact with Child in out of home care- 1 x month	Monthly/Quarterly	Monthly data share/Quarterly meeting
Contact with Child in non-court case-1 x month	Monthly/Quarterly	Monthly data share/Quarterly meeting

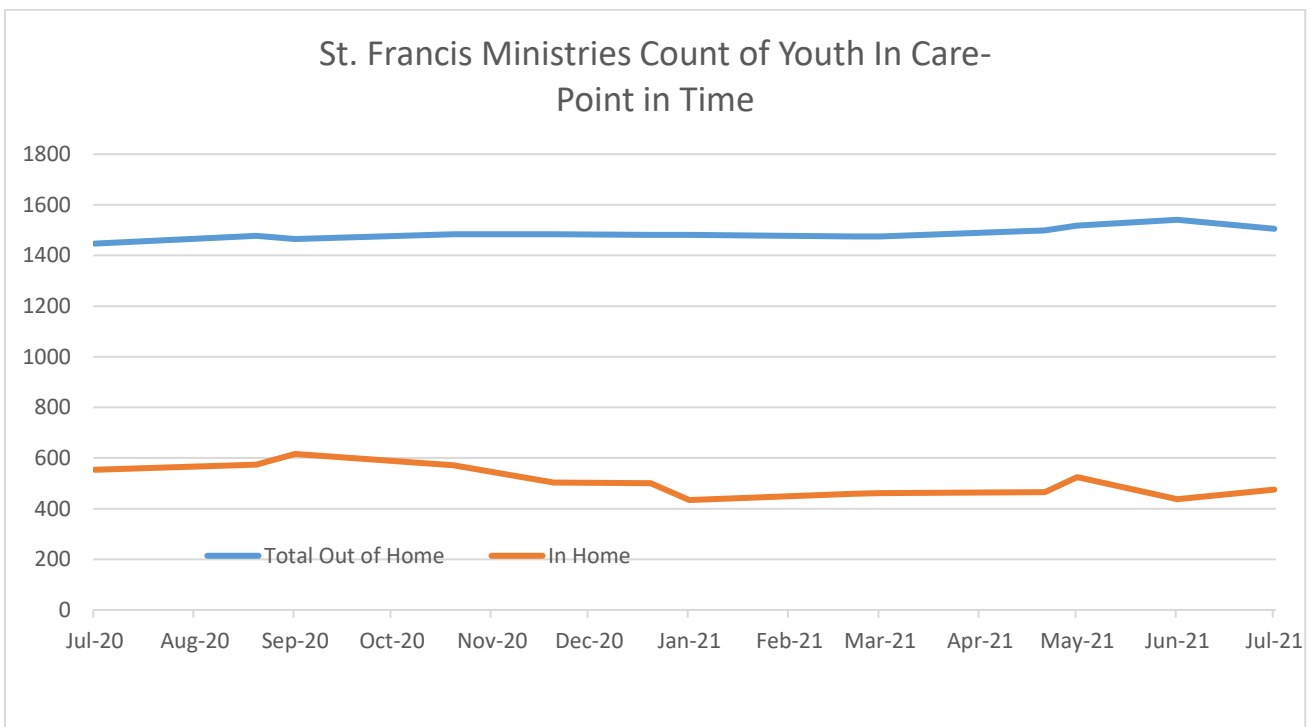
Outcome Measures	Frequency of Review	Forum
Absence of Maltreatment Recurrence	Monthly/Quarterly	Monthly data share/Quarterly meeting
Absence of Maltreatment in Foster Care	Monthly/Quarterly	Monthly data share/Quarterly meeting
Permanency for Children in Foster Care	Monthly/Quarterly	Monthly data share/Quarterly meeting
Timeliness of Adoption	Monthly/Quarterly	Monthly data share/Quarterly meeting
Exits to Adoption in less than 24 months	Monthly/Quarterly	Monthly data share/Quarterly meeting
Timeliness and Permanency of Reunification	Monthly/Quarterly	Monthly data share/Quarterly meeting
Placement Stability	Monthly/Quarterly	Monthly data share/Quarterly meeting
Reduction of Children in out of home care	Monthly/Quarterly	Monthly data share/Quarterly meeting

Section III: Fiscal Monitoring

CFS continues to monitor the lead agency’s financial statements. Saint Francis Ministries is a sub-recipient, which means they are only reimbursed for costs incurred to provide services. Saint Francis Ministries is required to conduct and submit an annual A-133 audit, as over \$500,000 in federal funds are utilized for this sub-grant.

CFS requires Saint Francis Ministries to submit an actual invoice for each service provided during the month. Invoiced expenditures are recorded via N-FOCUS in order to accurately claim federal funding for Title IV-E maintenance payments. A quarterly reconciliation of invoices to the monthly financial statement continues to be a requirement.

Below is a chart depicting the number of in-home and out-of-home youth served by Saint Francis Ministries point-in-time.



Section IV: Corrective Action

The Saint Francis Ministries contract includes performance retention measures enhancing CFS' ability to impose financial retention based on five performance metrics. These measures will begin to be enforced beginning January 1, 2021, one year after the contract beginning. During the spring of 2020, CFS placed Saint Francis Ministries on a corrective action plan based on several performance measures. Beginning August 1, 2020, CFS added a service area administrator to the ESA contract monitoring team to increase oversight and support the lead agency's provider & judicial/legal engagement, case management reviews, among other processes performed by the lead agency.

Section V: Functional Capacities

Children and Family Services (CFS) has conducted a review organized by the strengths and needs of the leads agency's functional capacities as required by legislation.

A. Direct Case Management

CFS Analysis of Direct Case Management Capacity:

Saint Francis Ministries began Full Service Case Management services in the Eastern Service Area starting on October 1, 2019, and transfer of cases began on October 22, 2019. This period of time was a change to the original start date of the contract, January 1, 2020. The decision was made to start transferring cases earlier during the October, November and December of 2019 to ensure an intentional, strategic, and safe transition of cases from Saint Francis Ministries. During this transition period, it was possible to have Saint Francis Ministries manage cases in the Eastern Service Area. On January 1, 2020, all cases were transferred to Saint Francis Ministries, and it was determined that measurement of performance of Saint Francis Ministries would commence on January 1, 2020.

Saint Francis Ministries has proposed to hire 116 case management positions to meet the state standard for caseload ratio. At the time of this report, Saint Francis Ministries has hired 130 case managers. Of those 130 case managers, 25 are in various stages of training,

CFS has requested a hiring plan from Saint Francis Ministries to be submitted on September 1, 2020, to address the issue of hiring staff to meet the caseload ratio.

Case management staff receives necessary training and CFS reviews and approves training curriculum. The administrative infrastructure within Saint Francis Ministries that supports case management includes: Human Resources, Legal Services, Finance, Communications, Information Technology and Training.

B. Utilization of Social Work Theory and Evidence-Based Practices to Include Processes for Ensuring Fidelity with Evidence-Based Practices

CFS Analysis of Social Work Theory and Evidence Based Practices Capacity:

CFS and Saint Francis Ministries continue to work with and establish evidence-based models for services in the Eastern Service Area. CFS implemented the Structured Decision Making assessment for safety in 2014 and it has been adopted by Saint Francis Ministries in the Eastern Service Area contract. Additionally, Saint Francis Ministries is establishing contracts for evidence-based models in order to assist CFS adherence to the Families First Prevention Service Act (FFPSA). CFS and Saint Francis Ministries have expertise and experience with on-going fidelity monitoring of evidence-based practices. Saint Francis Ministries has contracts with approximately 40 sub-contracted agencies to provide services to children and families in the Eastern Service Area. Saint Francis Ministries has started conversations with

seven local agencies to initiate Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) services for Evidence-Based Models. The agencies that will provide FFPSA services include: Omaha Home for Boys - Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT); Heartland Family Service - Parent Child Interactive Therapy (PCIT); KVC - PCIT; Omni - PCIT; Paradigm - PCIT, Multi-systemic Therapy (MST), TF-CBT; Nebraska Children's Home Society - Healthy Families America; Boys Town – MST, and; Daybreak -PCIT, TF-CBT. Additionally, Saint Francis Ministries is establishing Family Centered Treatment in the Eastern Service Area: however, it is running into a challenge of hiring a therapist level position for this program.

C. Supervision

CFS Supervision Capacity Analysis:

The organizational chart demonstrates that supervision capacity is available and identifies the following leadership positions: President/CEO, COO, Regional Vice President, Legal Counsel, Human Resources Manager, Accounting Director, Grant Development Director, Research and Analysis Manager. The supervisor to case manager ratio is 1:8 and is consistent with best practice standards.

D. Quality Assurance

CFS Quality Assurance Capacity Analysis:

The full-service case management contract has sufficient capacity for quality assurance as evidenced by frequent and regular communication with between CFS and Saint Francis Ministries Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) teams, the Regional Vice President, Director of Operations, Network Administration, Provider Relations Manager, Foster Care Director as well as others involved with CQI functions in the Eastern Service Area.

E. Training

CFS Training Capacity Analysis:

The Eastern Service Area contract has adequate capacity to complete the core functions of training. Initial staff training is delivered by the Center for Children Families and the Law (CCFL) to train both CFS Children and Family Service Specialists (CFSS) and Saint Francis Ministries case managers. This allows for consistent training in child welfare practices in accordance with state statute, as well as building relationships between the CFS Initial Assessment teams and ongoing case management (Saint Francis Ministries).

Saint Francis Ministries maintains a strong training program for its workforce. Saint Francis Ministries case managers are offered numerous opportunities for staff development including

workshops and/or online training. Additionally, CFS has coordinated with Saint Francis Ministries to train all Saint Francis Ministries case managers in the Safety Organized Practice model which serves to enhance case management.

F. Subcontract Management

CFS Subcontract Management Capacity Analysis:

Saint Francis Ministries manages its subcontractors through its Provider Relations team, which develops contracts for services and monitors performance and compliance of the subcontractors.

G. Network Development And Management

CFS Network Development and Management Capacity Analysis:

Saint Francis Ministries has contracts with approximately 40 sub-contracted agencies to provide services to children and families in the Eastern Service Area. During the transition of cases and into the first year of the operational start date, Saint Francis Ministries had to continue services established by the previous contractor in order to maintain stability in cases. As the year progresses, Saint Francis Ministries has been able to establish its own service array with local agencies.

H. Financial Management

CFS Analysis of Financial Management Capacity:

The lead agency has sufficient financial staff to manage the agency's finances. This is evidenced by the Finance Services unit, which consists of a CFO, Financial Compliance Director, Senior Accountants and Billing Specialists. Members of the staff bring a wealth of resources and expertise in the area of financial management and have child welfare experience in multiple states and internationally.

I. Financial Controls

CFS Analysis of Capacity for Financial Controls:

The lead agency's statements are audited annually by independent auditors. CFS has reviewed and approved the policies for payment processing and internal auditing. CFS also performs audits and monthly cost reconciliations of all project expenditures. The lead agency has sufficient capacity in the area of financial controls.

J. Utilization Management

CFS Analysis of Utilization Management Capacity:

Saint Francis Ministries has a Utilization Management team dedicated to assisting case management in identify and implementing services for children and families in the Eastern Service Area. The Utilization Management team accesses services through local providers to meet the needs of families in their community.

K. Community Outreach

CFS Analysis of Community Outreach Capacity:

Saint Francis Ministries community outreach efforts includes attending various meetings such as Douglas County Through the Eyes of the Child, Operation Youth Success, Nebraska Indian Child Welfare Coalition meetings, South Omaha Juvenile Justice Forum, and RED Meeting Urban League of Nebraska.

L. Coordination and Planning

CFS Analysis of Coordination and Planning Capacity:

CFS and Saint Francis Ministries are actively engaged in coordination of activities from training to transfer of cases. This includes development and delivery of services to meet the needs of children and families in the Eastern Service Area.

M. Community and Stakeholder Engagement

CFS Analysis of Community and Stakeholder Engagement:

Saint Francis Ministries community and stakeholder engagement includes holding quarterly provider/stakeholder meetings, attending Judge's meetings, and various meetings in the community. In addition, Saint Francis Ministries attends the following: 1184 multidisciplinary teams (several times per week), Saint Francis Ministries Provider Meetings, Douglas County Through the Eyes of the Child, Operation Youth Success, Nebraska Indian Child Welfare Coalition meetings, South Omaha Juvenile Justice Forum and RED Meeting Urban League of Nebraska.

Saint Francis Ministries maintains an Eastern Service Area Resource Guide listing community partners and non-government resources.

N. Responsiveness to Requests from Policy Makers and the Legislature

CFS Analysis of Responsiveness to Requests from Policy Makers and Legislature:

The organizational structure and coordination between CFS and Saint Francis Ministries is sufficient to gather data, analyze data, and develop requested reports. On many occasions with the previous contractor, CFS requested data reports and such reports were time delivered and organized in the manner requested. Likewise, requests made to Saint Francis Ministries are provided in a timely manner to meet the deadlines of policy makers and the Legislature.