

VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL
AND REHABILITATION SERVICES

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Program Improvement Plan

**Final Report
May 2004**

**Child and Family Service Review
2000-2001**

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of State Agency: Vermont Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services

Period Under Review:

Federal Fiscal Year for On-Site Review Sample: FFY 1999

Period of AFCARS Data: FFY 1999

Period of NCANDS Data: Calendar 1999

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Reporting Periods: **Information reported on for this period is in bold.**

First PIP Quarter	April – June 2002
Second PIP Quarter	July – September 2002
Third PIP Quarter	October – December 2002
Fourth PIP Quarter	January – March 2003
Fifth PIP Quarter	April – June 2003
Sixth PIP Quarter	July – September 2003
Seventh PIP Quarter	October – December 2003
Final Report	January – March 2004

AMENDMENTS

1. The content of the attached PIP was re-negotiated on 8/13/02 to amend the benchmark for submission of a plan to promote placement stability (see page 15). The approval letter is attached.
2. This PIP report reflects a change in Goal 4B (see page 10) which is a result of approved activity in the initial PIP under promoting placement stability.
3. This PIP report reflects a change in several benchmark dates for Goal 3 (see pages 8-9), which were discussed with and approved by the Regional Office on January 16, 2002 via phone conference.
4. This PIP report reflects changes in several benchmark dates for Goals 2A, 3 and 4A.
5. This PIP report reflects changes in several benchmark dates for Goals 2A, 4A, 4B and 4C.

DEPARTMENT MISSION

We are committed to protect children and strengthen families, in partnership with families and communities.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- We will carry out our responsibility to serve the best interests of children who are abused, neglected, delinquent or beyond the control of their parents.
- Children deserve to be safe and secure.
- Children belong in families who are committed to them into adulthood.
- We will focus our services on the child in his or her family, culture and community.
- We will involve individuals we serve in the planning and evaluation of services.
- We will collaborate with communities to create public policy and services to support children and their families.
- We will deliver services within the available budgets.
- Our decisions, policies and internal organization will support and reflect our mission.

OUTCOMES AND INDICATORS

Children served by the division are safe from abuse

- *Children living with their own families are safe from re-abuse.*
- *Children in custody, on adoption subsidy and/or living in settings regulated by the division are safe from abuse.*

Children served by the division have enduring relationships with healthy, nurturing families.

- *The division achieves permanence for children in custody within a reasonable amount of time.*
- *Children's placements are stable.*
- *Children discharged from SRS custody do not return to custody.*

Children served by the division are successful in family, school and community.

- *School-aged children in custody regularly attend an approved school program.*
- *Children in custody are healthy.*
- *Children in custody are free from substance abuse.*
- *Children in custody are free from pregnancy.*
- *Youth are employed, if appropriate.*

Youth adjudicated delinquent are free from criminal behavior.

- *Delinquent youth in custody and on probation abide by the conditions of their probation certificate.*
- *Delinquent youth in custody and on probation do not commit further delinquencies or adult crimes.*

THEMES FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

In examining the areas for improvement, we have identified a number of themes that cut across all outcome areas. We are prioritizing work in these areas for this program improvement period, as we anticipate that improvements in these areas will have the greatest positive impact on safety, permanency and wellbeing of children and families we serve.

Themes	Areas of Focus
Quality Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statute and Policy Compliance • Quality of Services • Social Worker Contact • Title IV-E Compliance • Consumer Input • Outcome Reports • Aligned with CFSR Process. • PIP Monitoring
Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross jurisdictional placements • Recruitment and Retention of Foster and Adoptive Homes
Assessment/Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured Decision Making
Permanency Planning/Placement Stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Court Delays • Placement Continuum/Services and Supports for Placement

The following table summarizes activities planned to support these goals.

Theme	Year One Activities	Year Two Activities
Quality Assurance	Design Quality Assurance system. Develop and implement mechanisms to monitor PIP implementation.	Implement Quality Assurance system. Continue to monitor PIP implementation.
Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment, Retention, Support	Address cross-jurisdictional placements.	Address recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive homes.
Assessment/Documentation	Research, design, pilot Structured Decision-making (including Assessment) Tools.	Train staff and implement Structured Decision-making (including Assessment) Tools.
Permanency Planning/Placement Stability	Research placement services and supports for placement.	Implement new systems and placement options.
		Design and implement system to select/review permanency goal.
	Plan to address court delays.	Implement plan.

GOALS TO IMPROVE QUALITY ASSURANCE

Goal 1: Design a comprehensive Quality Assurance System to focus on outcomes and address:

- Statutory and Policy Compliance
- Consumer Input
- Outcome Reports
- PIP Monitoring
- Social Worker Contact
- Title IV-E Compliance
- Alignment with CFSR Process
- Quality of Services

GOAL: DESIGN A QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM LEAD PERSON/UNIT: QA COORDINATOR			1
Benchmark	Evaluation Method	BENCHMARK DATE	MET
1. Provide training to division managers, supervisors and administrative assistants on using newly designed quarterly outcome reports for local monitoring and planning.	Training delivered.	2/7/02 & 2/28/02	Yes
2. Produce outcomes reports on a quarterly basis, in January, April, July and October.	Outcome reports published.	4/02 - 8/02 -11/02 2/03 - 5/03 – 8/03 11/03 – 1/04 – 4/04	Yes
3. Compile report organizing information solicited from central office and district office staff during Summer-Fall 2001 regarding quality assurance design.	Information collected and compiled; report issued	12/01 & 3/02	Yes
4. Research QA systems in use in other states and published by national organizations.	Report issued	3/02 & Ongoing	Yes
5. Form steering committee of staff, stakeholders and consumers to guide system design.	Committee is formed.	3/29/02	Yes
6. Write quarterly reports on PIP implementation.	Reports sent to Region I and division managers.	8/02 - 11/02 – 2/03 – 5/03 – 8/03 – 11/03 – 1/04 – 4/04	Yes
7. Work with Citizen Review Panel (CAPTA Board) to solicit input into the QA design.	Sessions documented and information compiled.	Revised Benchmark: 12/4/02 Met 12/2/02	Yes
8. Draft proposal for QA design.	Draft plan developed.	9/02	Yes
9. Solicit feedback from appropriate staff, stakeholders and consumers.	Feedback collected and compiled.	12/02	Yes
10. Revise design if needed.	Revised design, system implemented.	3/03	Yes
11. Implement QA System	QA approach implemented in one district every two months.	1/03	Yes
12. Monitor system: revise where necessary.		3/27/03 – 6/03 12/03 – 2/04	Yes
This Goal Has Been Successfully Completed.			

1. An Outcomes Training was held twice in February 2002 providing 76 directors, supervisors and administrative assistants with the opportunity to become familiar with and practice analyzing outcome reports and pivot tables and linking these new tools to casework practice.
2. Outcome reports were designed, piloted, reviewed, adapted and approved by the Outcomes Committee. The selection criteria for cases matches the syntax used for the national standards. The first "test" report was generated for the Oct – Dec 2001 quarter. Over the next two parties, we worked on data quality issues. The report for the quarter Apr – Jun 2002 is the first "official" report, and is being attached to this report to provide information on progress towards outcomes.

Reports will continue to be generated on a quarterly basis. They will be reviewed by the Outcomes Committee to identify trends, progress and/or concerns. This information will be directed to the appropriate person, district, and/or unit. **Outcome reports were produced and disseminated for the eighth quarter in 4/04.**

3. The Quality Assurance Unit interviewed key central office staff to determine roles and responsibilities in delivering quality services. In addition, the QA Unit visited each of the 12 districts and our Emergency Services Program during staff meetings and brainstormed characteristics of quality services. Reports were issued and information from both reports was used in developing QA indicators.
4. Information was and continues to be gathered for the Quality Assurance Advisory Committee (QAAC) from 9 states that currently have comprehensive QA systems. These reports are used to guide the committee in developing our system.
5. The QA Coordinator is working with the QAAC, an advisory committee consisting of district and central office staff. The committee's task is to design the QA system. In addition, she is working with our Consumer Advisory Boards and Youth Council to identify and consider methods of collecting and using consumer feedback to improve services and program development.
6. **This report fulfills this activity.**
7. The Quality Assurance Coordinator solicited input from an in house advisory committee (QAAC) to design the QA system. However, several times throughout the system development, information was provided to different community and consumer groups soliciting volunteers and or input. In April 2002, an article was published in the Foster and Adoptive Family Association (VFAFA) newsletter. In 4/02, the Statewide Consumer Advisory Board reviewed information on quality assurance systems and decided to collect samples of client surveys for future consideration. The Vermont Coalition of Residential Programs (VCORP) offered input on contracted services monitoring. Presentations to several consumer and stakeholder groups, including the CAPTA Board, are planned for the next quarter to introduce the QA system. On December 2, 2002 the Quality Assurance Coordinator met with the Consumer Advisory Board to present the draft of the QA System for feedback. The committee reviewed the draft in its entirety and made comments. On December 4, 2002 this activity was repeated for the CAPTA Board.
8. The proposed QA System consists of two phases. Phase I includes a new district review that mirrors the CFS Review and other components already in place or underway. Phase II focuses on securing and utilizing staff, consumer and stakeholder input. The proposed system was presented to Unit Chiefs on 9/24/02. The Presentation consisted the system overview with a focus on the proposed district reviews. Unit Chiefs expressed support for the concept and process as well as concerns about resources available for the district onsite review. On 9/27/02, the proposed system was presented to the Division Management Team. While directors recognize the value of the process, they shared the same concerns about workload. Together we will work to identify any supports that may be available to reduce the stress and the workload of the review process. The QA System proposal is attached.
9. See above narrative numbers 7 & 8.

10. No revisions were suggested or made to the proposed QA System.
11. District Reviews, an important component of the QA system, have been scheduled in four districts. In January, the first district scheduled for a review received its data packet. The Outcomes committee assisted in analyzing the data. The district director submitted his completed District Self-Assessment in the third week in April. The onsite review is scheduled for the week of May 5th. We have a district review scheduled for every other month through November. During the summer we will determine the review schedule for the remaining districts. Phase I of the QA system for contracted services was implemented in September 2002.
12. This phase included the addition of a contractual checklist to the Licensing review to ensure compliance with specific components of our contracts with residential service providers. At the scheduled 6-month review meeting, held on 3/27/03, the committee discussed several issues and made recommendations for adjustments to our State Systems of Care Manager. All recommendations were accepted. Minor adjustments were made to the district review process after the first review in Springfield May 5-8, 2003. These adjustments were made as a result of feedback from the review participants. We made changes to the case audit tool, to some of the indicators for review and to the onsite review schedule. Peter Watson, review team members and Springfield staff were very helpful in determining where adjustments were necessary. We will continue to make necessary adjustments after each district review. Adjustments to criteria for the case sample were made after the third review. We decided not to review any cases that have been open for longer than 5 years. We want to focus on current practice and this change will help. After the Hartford review. We have a District Review Debriefing meeting scheduled for December 2nd to discuss the process, the tools, and the indicators used for reviews. Everyone who has participated in past reviews has been invited to attend. On December 2, 2003, sixteen people met to discuss the review process and to make suggestions for adjustments. Several issues were discussed and some minor changes were made to the process. In addition, two committees were formed to look closely at the indicators used for district review and at the Office Environmental Study process. These are task specific committees that will make recommendations to main office management. **On 2/23/04 the Quality Assurance Coordinator met with a group of people to review the indicators we are using for district reviews. Changes were made to several indicators to provide clarity and/or to improve measurability. In addition, some indicators were dropped because they weren't providing us with the information we had expected and other indicators were added.**

GOALS TO IMPROVE FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE HOME LICENSING, APPROVAL, AND RECRUITMENT

Goal 2: Design and implement a system to ensure ongoing, systematic efforts to recruit foster and adoptive families as well as support of local recruitment efforts that will address:

- Appropriate use of cross-jurisdictional placements for children waiting for adoption
- Ongoing recruitment efforts

GOAL: ESTABLISH POLICY AND MECHANISMS TO ACHIEVE AND MONITOR THE APPROPRIATE USE OF CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL PLACEMENTS FOR CHILDREN WAITING FOR ADOPTION LEAD PERSON/UNIT: OPERATIONS MANAGER/ADOPTION MANAGER			2A
Benchmark	EVALUATION METHOD	Benchmark Date	MET
1. Refine design of regional permanency planning teams established Fall 2001 to review all children free for adoption who do not reside with an adoptive family.	Teams are meeting regularly.	5/02	Yes
2. Review policy on foster parent appeals of a child's move from their home to ensure that it supports permanency for children. If necessary, revise policy.	Decision made. Revised policy issued, if necessary.	Benchmark for policy revision – Fourth Quarter. Second benchmark revision: Sixth Quarter Third benchmark revision: Sixth Quarter Met 12/31/03	Yes
3. Identify and address what supports are needed to support district use of cross-jurisdictional placements of children free for adoption.	Additional supports needed.	Second Quarter	Yes
4. Design automated supports for cross-district matching of children to foster and adoptive parents to facilitate the selection of the most appropriate home for each child.	System designed and ready to implement once migration of old database is completed.	New Benchmark: Eighth Quarter	Yes
5. Plan and schedule training on cross-jurisdictional adoption issues to SRS staff, based on the needs identified during TA consults.	Curriculum developed and first training cycle scheduled	New Benchmark: Eighth Quarter	Yes
6. Revise policy to provide clear direction on consideration of cross-jurisdictional adoptive placements.	Revised policy issued.	9/17/03	Yes
This Goal Has Been Successfully Completed.			

1. In the past, permanency-planning teams received referrals for children whose foster family would not sign the intent to adopt, after the TPR process was completed. As of May 2002, teams are reviewing all cases of children for whom adoption is the goal and the home has not indicated intent to adopt regardless of where the TPR process is. Under this new timeline, cases can be reviewed as much as a year earlier in a child's stay in foster care.
2. The policy on reviewing case plan decisions was revised on 12/31/04. The change supports faster movement towards permanency when the foster family declines to adopt. Under the new policy, if they decline they give up the right to appeal the move from their home. The policy can be viewed at: <http://www.state.vt.us/srs/manual/casework/123.html>.
3. In addition to continued permanency planning team meetings, two resources/supports have been identified as important to support the use of cross-jurisdictional placements, they include:
 - Adopt US Kids web page - Resource coordinators received education and training on the use of the Adopt US Kids web page. This site includes photos of our children who are free for adoption and prospective parents from across the country.
 - Education - We have identified that field staff need additional information on cross-jurisdictional placements. We believe once they are better informed they will realize the benefits and importance of this practice to children and families. We plan to address this by developing an informational packet for resource coordinators and directors.
4. During this quarter, we have made significant progress in rolling out new web-based computer application. Over the next year, we plan to migrate many of our old database applications to the web-based interface. In evaluating our schedule for these improvements, we have concluded that it does not make sense to spend time building a matching database in the "old world". Once our foster care licensing and placement database are migrated, we can easily build in a matching function. **Initial design work was completed for an automated system that will track resource family information from the time of their inquiry to the time of closure. This will include licensing and training information, placement and payment history and will include the capacity to query the database for current openings, based on a description of the child, and the preferences and skills of the resource family. The attached report outlines the design.**
5. On May 3, 2002, Margaret Burt from the ABA and Drenda Lakin from the NRCSNA led a discussion on preadoptive cross-jurisdictional placements at our Permanency Planning Implementation Committee. The purpose of this presentation was to begin a dialog between SRS, judges, lawyers and others and to identify barriers to cross-jurisdictional placements.

During our period of program improvement, the capacity of our system to find and utilize interjurisdictional adoptive placements has improved substantially. We have taken an informal, rather than formal approach to training on these issues. Because we believe that worker attitudes were our most difficult barrier, we believe that our most effective approach has been to address these issues systematically, worker by worker and child by child.

Over the past two years, the following steps have been taken to support the appropriate use of interjurisdictional adoptive placements:

- **Training for Court Improvement Project participants in March 2002**
- **Distribution to all district offices of *Placing Children Across Geographic Boundaries* written by the National Adoption Center Adoption Exchange Association.**
- **Routine solicitation of homestudies from families living out-of-state as part of the Project Family initiative.**
- **Training for supervisors on the ICPC on 2/90/04.**
- **Policy clarifications were issued in January and May 2004 on use of interjurisdictional resources, and on teaming around permanency issues, including with Project Family staff. (See policies 92 and 125 at: <http://www.state.vt.us/srs/manual/casework/castoc.htm>)**
- **Active participation in the AdoptUSKids project.**

- **Enhanced use of our web page for recruitment (see <http://www.state.vt.us/srs/adoption/index.html>)**
- **Individual consultation by Project Family staff with district social workers, on a child-specific basis. This last strategy is perhaps the most important, as the key to change in this area is convincing individual social workers that they can safely consider placements far away, and in doing so, will achieve the best outcome for a child about whom they are concerned.**

6. The revised policy was issued on 9/17/03. Policy No. 92, entitled Sharing Resource Families Cross-Jurisdictionally, is designed to promote meeting a child’s needs in an appropriate home, even when that home is in another district. The policy may be viewed at:

<http://www.state.vt.us/srs/manual/casework/92.htm>

GOAL: DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT A SYSTEM TO ENSURE ONGOING, SYSTEMATIC EFFORTS TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE FAMILIES AS WELL AS SUPPORT OF LOCAL RECRUITMENT EFFORTS LEAD PERSON/UNIT: COMMUNITY RESOURCE TEAM			2B
ACTION STEP	EVALUATION METHOD	QTR	Benchmark Date
1. Determine whether goal can be accomplished with existing staff resources or if additional contractual services are needed. If contracted services are needed, implement following steps:	Decision made.	2	July 2002
2. Implement family assessment and in-service training components of Foster PRIDE program.	Implement in all 12 districts.	3	12/02
3. Design recruitment and retention strategy.	Plan approved by DMT	4	12/02
This goal was merged with Goal 4A when the recruitment and retention strategy was developed in 12/2002. There is no further activity here.			

1. We have determined that this goal can be accomplished with existing staff. Resources secured to assist us in meeting this goal include participation in a Casey Breakthrough Series on recruitment and retention as well as access to a marketing analysis completed by our Adoptions Unit. The analysis identified strategies to identify and tailor marketing messages to target audiences.

In addition, on July 1, 2002 twelve resource coordinators, some of their community partners and several central office staff attended training with Denise Goodman, PhD, an independent consultant with the Family to Family project. This project has been adopted in a number of states as a way to better recruit, train and support resource families with a focus on recruiting families from the neighborhoods from which children are coming into care. Follow up discussions with other key central office staff are planned and resource coordinators have already implemented some of the strategies presented.

2. The Family Mutual Assessment (MFA) was implemented in December 2002. The goal of the MFA is to help families consider their past and current life experiences and to define their strengths and needs in five competency categories. These areas are:

- Protecting and nurturing children
- Meeting children’s developmental needs
- Supporting relationships between children and their families

- Connecting children to safe, nurturing relationships
- Working as a member of a professional team

The Foster and Adoptive Parent Training Partnership (FAPTP) offers specialized trainings for licensed foster and adoptive parents. Trainings are 6-hour courses and are offered regionally. Trainings offered this quarter include: Attachment and Trauma, Building Self-Esteem in Children at Risk, Kinship Caregiving: Common Perspectives and Challenges, Talking to Children and Youth About Foster Care, Adoption and Their Personal Histories, and Communicating to Build Effective Relationships.

3. The remaining benchmarks in this goal will be addressed and met with activity in Goal 4A under Resource Family Recruitment and Retention.

GOALS TO IMPROVE ASSESSMENT

Goal 3: Research, design and implement a Structured Decision Making Process that will address:

- Assessment tools to be used during the investigation process
- Initial and ongoing assessment of intact families
- Documentation of ongoing progress

Technical Assistance Needed:

TA is requested to design and assist with implementation of structured decision-making tools.

GOAL: RESEARCH, DESIGN AND PILOT A STRUCTURED ASSESSMENT AND DECISION MAKING PROCESS. LEAD PERSON/UNIT: POLICY AND PLANNING CHIEF/POLICY AND PLANNING UNIT			3
BENCHMARK	EVALUATION METHOD	BENCHMARK DATE	MET
1. Finalize contract with Children's Research Center of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency to assist in the development and implementation of a set of structured decision-making tools for use during child abuse investigations and ongoing work with children & families.	Final Contract signed	12/01	Yes
2. With assistance of CRC and an internal work group, develop tools.	Tools finalized	9/02 and ongoing Stage I – Intake and Investigation completed 12/02 Stage II – Out-of-Home Care Revised Completion Date Eighth Quarter	Yes
3. Complete design of automated version of tools.	Automated versions developed and ready to implement once migration of old database is completed.	10/02 and ongoing Stage I Completion Revised Benchmark 4/1/03-Met Stage II design completion date Revised Eighth Quarter	Stage I Yes Stage II Yes
4. Develop in-house training capacity by planning and scheduling training of trainers	Trainers trained	Stage I Revised Benchmark 4/1/03 Stage II Revised Benchmark Eighth Quarter	Yes
5. Develop management reports to monitor tool completion, and aggregate information at the case, unit, district and statewide level.	Reports developed, reviewed by users and revised as necessary.	Revised Benchmark Revised 11/1/03	Yes
This Goal Has Been Successfully Completed.			

1. The contract was finalized for consultation services from the CRC for Structured Decision Making design and implementation. Four work groups consisting of knowledgeable and experienced field staff and stakeholders were formed to assist with the development work. The groups and their tasks are:
 - Steering Committee — Oversee overall plan, review all proposed instruments and policies, design training approach, advise on automation issues, develop overall plan for implementation.
 - Intake and Investigation — Adapt tools to assess report acceptance, response priority, immediate safety and ongoing risk.
 - Ongoing Social Work — Adapt tools for re-assessment of risk, family strengths and needs, and reunification potential
 - Out-of-Home Care — Develop new tools for child and level-of-care assessment.

The Policy and Planning Chief is overseeing all development work. The Children’s Research Division has been on site five times. Each work group has met at least three full days between mid-April 2002 and late June 2002. In addition, a sub-committee of the Out-of-Home work group met three days over the summer. At this point, tools for intake and investigation and for ongoing social work are in final draft form. The Planning and Evaluation Division has begun work on automation of the forms. A schedule for staff training has been set.

Implementation of these first two packages is planned for February 2003. During the fall, work on the Out-of-Home Tools will be completed, with implementation anticipated in April 2003.

2. Development of SDM Phase I tools is complete and includes: the Report and Acceptance tool, the Response Priority tool, the Safety Assessment and the Risk Assessment. These tools will be used in the intake and investigation process with all cases. Design work has been completed on all tools.

During the quarter, we have re-visited our plan for implementation of Stage II Structured Decision-making Tools, in light of our plans to migrate databases to our new web-based database system. Our goal is to design all of the tools by the last the PIP quarter and implement them on the same schedule as we migrate associated databases.

SDM Tool	Design Date	Associated Databases
Child Functional Survey	Completed	Face Sheet
Level of Care Tool Caregiver Responsibility	Completed	Placement Form Foster Care Licensing (Create Matching Capacity)
Reunification Assessment	Completed	Supervisory Tracking Form

3. Automation of the Intake Form is in progress and we already have volunteers lined up to test. Automation of Phase I tools is taking more time than we expected. Approval has been granted by the Regional Office to submit revised benchmarks. Phase I of SDM, intake and investigation, was implemented on April 16, 2003. All 12 districts are using SDM and adjustments continue to be made to the automated tools. **Design work for Stage II SDM tools is complete. The Level of Care Tree Tool was piloted in February 2004. We are currently analyzing the results to determine if any last minute adjustments need to be made.**
4. The SDM Steering Committee reviewed and supports the training schedule. The plan is developed, trainers are identified and the dates are scheduled. Both Training of Trainers and User Training for Stage I is schedule for March 2003. On March 10, 2002 Kathy Park, Janice Ereth and Cindy Walcott trained all of our district and division supervisors and other main office personnel to be SDM trainers or support staff. An aggressive training schedule was developed for 10 trainers to conduct a total of 6 trainings over the next two weeks. Each training team included a local supervisor, which enhanced the sessions and increased buy-in from field staff. **We have contracted with the Children’s Research Center to conduct train the trainer sessions for Stage II tools, which is anticipated to take place Fall 2004.**

5. Approval has been granted by the Regional Office to revise this benchmark. A data extract has been sent to our contractors; we expect to receive our first management report in November 2003. The Children’s Research Center delivered our first SDM management report in November. This report describes our implementation and ongoing use of the SDM system. We were pleased to see a high rate of tool completion for Phase I of this process.

GOALS TO IMPROVE PLACEMENT STABILITY AND PERMANENCY PLANNING

Goal 4: Design and implement an approach to increase stability and improve permanency including strategies to address court delays which will address:

- Screening and assessment of strengths and needs for children entering or in substitute care
- Additional services and/or supports to promote placement stability.
- Decision-making protocol for identifying and reviewing permanency goals.
- Delays in court time frames and decisions that impact permanency planning.

GOAL: IDENTIFY ADDITIONAL SERVICES AND/OR SUPPORTS TO PROMOTE PLACEMENT STABILITY, WITH A FOCUS ON STABILITY OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN (AGE 6-11). LEAD PERSON/UNIT: COMMUNITY RESOURCE UNIT/RESOURCE COMMITTEE			4A
BENCHMARK	EVALUATION METHOD	BENCHMARK DATE	MET
1. Determine additional technical assistance needs.	Needs determined	July 2001	Yes
2. Submit plan to regional office for activities to support this goal, including evaluation method.	Plan submitted	September 30, 2002	Yes
Resource Family Recruitment and Retention			
3. Apply for Casey Breakthrough Series Support on Resource Family Recruitment and Retention.	Application submitted	Application 6/02 Award 9/02	Yes
4. Form Core Team	Team formed	6/02	Yes
5. Establish Extended Advisory Team	Team formed	10/02	Yes
6. Participate in Learning Sessions 1-3	3 Sessions completed	12/02-5/03- 11/03	Yes

GOAL: IDENTIFY ADDITIONAL SERVICES AND/OR SUPPORTS TO PROMOTE PLACEMENT STABILITY, WITH A FOCUS ON STABILITY OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN (AGE 6-11). LEAD PERSON/UNIT: COMMUNITY RESOURCE UNIT/RESOURCE COMMITTEE			4A
7. Implement strategies developed in Learning Series 1 and 2 in the pilot site.	Track increase in recruitment	5/03	Yes
8. Develop a plan to disseminate information on successful strategies with other districts.	Information shared	5/03 – 10/03	Yes
9. Implement Plan	Interested districts plan to utilize strategies from BSC	Quarters 7 & 8	Yes
Foster Parent Support			
10. Provide facilitator training for Foster Parent Peer Support Group facilitators.	Track sessions offered and # of participants	10/02	Yes
11. Disseminate model of Facilitated Foster Parent Peer Support groups to remaining 8 districts.	Interested districts have project in place.	10/02	Yes
12. Each district has some type of program/strategy to support foster parents.	Foster parents have the opportunity to attend supportive activities	New Benchmark: Quarter 7	Yes
Improve Foster Family Assessment			
13. Assess Foster PRIDE Family Assessment Project and make necessary adjustments to achieve intended goals.	Plan developed	New Benchmark: Quarter 8	Yes
Structured Decision Making			
14. Finalize SDM Tools to promote placement stability. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Functional Survey • Placement Decision-making Tree • Caregiver Responsibility tool 	Continue to track Placement Stability data quarterly, with special emphasis on quarters 6-8	Final Drafts completed 12/02 Stage II – Out-of-Home Care Tools Revised New Benchmark: 9/03	Yes
15. Automate SDM Tools	Track Placement Stability	See Goal No. 3, Benchmark 3	N/A
16. Implement Social Worker Contact Guidelines	Track Placement Stability	4/16/03	Yes
Division Re-Organization			
17. Finalize plan to re-organize existing division positions to increase supports to district for development and evaluation of placement resources and placement supports, including in home supports. Redefined positions will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems of Care Manager for focus district operations and statewide systems of care • Three Local Systems of Care Coordinators to focus I developing, maintaining and evaluation local and regional systems of care. 	Positions created	12/02	Yes

GOAL: IDENTIFY ADDITIONAL SERVICES AND/OR SUPPORTS TO PROMOTE PLACEMENT STABILITY, WITH A FOCUS ON STABILITY OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN (AGE 6-11). LEAD PERSON/UNIT: COMMUNITY RESOURCE UNIT/RESOURCE COMMITTEE			4A
18. Begin re-allocation of personnel.	Positions shift	12/02	Yes
19. Complete re-allocation of personnel.	Changeover complete	4/03	Yes
20. Teams will assess the needs of the districts/regions and devise a plan for meeting those needs.	Rolling evaluation based on district outcomes	New Benchmark: Eighth Quarter	Yes
21. Local systems of Care Teams will use Placement Stability Systems Analysis as a starting place to conduct a more in-depth analysis identifying gaps/overlaps in service. Pay special attention to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respite Care, including kinship options • Kinship Care • Crisis supports for foster families • Behavioral consultation for foster Families. 	Secondary analysis completed	New Benchmark: Eight Quarter	Yes
22. Develop plan to realign local/regional supports as indicated by the Placement Stability Systems Analysis.	Plan Developed	New Benchmark: Eight Quarter	Yes
Improve Information Available About Reasons For Placement Changes			
23. In conjunction with mandated changes in AFCARS reporting beginning with the period 10/1/02-3/31/03, re-evaluate "placement change reason" computer codes.	Changes made.	10/02	Yes
24. Implement changes.	Implementation complete.	10/02	Yes
25. Design a report that summarizes placement change reasons.	Report designed and ready for implementation once migration of old database is completed.	New Benchmark Eight Quarter	Yes
Improve Information to Kinship Care Providers			
26. Work with Grandparent Care Taker Group representatives to finalize Kin Care Manual.	Collaboration on manual completion.	2/03	Yes
27. Print Kinship Care Manual	Copies made	New Benchmark Eighth Quarter	Yes
28. Disseminate Kin Care Manual	Copies distributed	New Benchmark Eight Quarter	Yes
Improve Assessment Capacity			
29. Initiate process to develop Mental Health Assessments for all new entrants to custody.	Mental health worker located in each district	7/03	Yes
This Goal Has Been Successfully Completed.			

1. On October 24 & 25, 2001, staff from the National Resource Center for Foster Care & Permanency Planning met with various SRS staff members to obtain information regarding services and supports for children in substitute care. They provided us with a written report summarizing our current situation. We are not requesting further technical assistance at this time.
2. We requested and received an adjustment to the date that this report is due. We are conducting an analysis of our custody population and identifying factors associated with stability and instability. This analysis will provide us with detailed information to be used in the development of our plan to improve stability for children ages 6-11. The plan is due September 30, 2002. The Placement Stability Plan was submitted to the Regional Office on 9/30/02.
3. We were selected to participate as a Scholarship Team in the Casey Breakthrough Series on resource family recruitment and retention. We have selected the Barre District as a pilot for this project.
4. The core team is selected and consists of: Shaun Donahue, Community Resource Team Manager, Diane Robie, Family Foster Care Specialist, Joan Rock, Barre Resource Coordinator and Jodi Leonard, Foster Family Representative.
5. Invitations to participate on the extended team were mailed during the week of 10/21/02. This team will participate in 3 learning series related to recruitment and retention as well as pilot and evaluate Rapid Change strategies learned throughout the series.
6. Breakthrough Learning Series number 1 was completed in December 2002. The extended team met in January 2003 to work towards established goals. The second Series was held on May 5-6, 2003 with the third scheduled for November 3-4, 2003. Information on the Breakthrough Series was presented to the Vermont Foster and Adoptive Family Association (VFafa) Network during the April 2003 meeting and will be further explored during the July meeting. This information will also be presented as a workshop during the November 2003 1st annual Collaboration Conference in Killington, VT.

Data from the pilot site shows an increase of 20% in the recruitment of resource families during the first six months of the Breakthrough Series.

The Breakthrough Series core team traveled to St. Louis in November 2003 to attend the third session of the Breakthrough Learning Series. They learned about methods to ensure Sustainability and Spread of newly recruited resource families.

7. A number of different strategies have been implemented to increase the number of Resource Families in the pilot areas. These strategies and other activities resulted in a 20% increase in resource families at the 6th month period. Breakthrough strategies are called PDSAs (Plan, Do, Study Act). Successful PDSAs include:
 - Using resource families as a referral service
 - Reducing the amount of time between the initial inquiry and follow-up with interested families.
 - Engaging resource families in a mutual assessment process.
8. PDSAs have been shared in a variety of ways: through email, at resource coordinators meetings and at the VFafa network meetings. In addition, our Family Foster Care Specialist has focused on sharing the philosophy and methodology of the Breakthrough Series, which stresses starting with small changes, and then building on that change.

The Breakthrough Series Core Team will present at the next Division Management Team on October 24th. The purpose of the presentation is to: share information and results from the Series as the formal part of the national inclusion is coming to an end, and talk about plans to train resource coordinators and others using the planning model outlined in the Series.

On October 24, 2003, Diane Robie our family foster care specialist and Shaun Donahue our director of field services presented Breakthrough Series information to the Division Management Team. This presentation included a description of the model and impressive stats on the results achieved in the pilot site. Directors were asked to think about participating in regional teams to replicate the strategies. The division has committed to move the Breakthrough Series statewide. All 12 districts have convened core that will attend one of two training days, which are scheduled for February 6th, and 12th. These teams will develop goals in the areas of:

- Appropriate resources for families and children
- True partnerships between resource families, primary families and the agency.
- Placement stability
- Kinship placements
- Sibling placements
- Permanency
- Retention
- Involvement and satisfaction of primary families and youth.

9. **Breakthrough Vermont is well underway. Each district has formed a core team consisting of staff, primary parents, resource parents, youth and community members. Every team was trained in the Breakthrough methodology for promoting rapid system change, trainings were held on February 6 & 12, 2004. Teams have identified measures, developed plans and are testing small changes that will lead to improvements.**
10. Two trainings were held in October 2002. One was facilitated by representatives from FosterParentNet and the other by our Family Foster Care Specialist. Foster parent support groups are meeting in several districts offering support, resources and training to local foster parents.
11. This model was disseminated in the October 2002 trainings in which all of the districts were represented.
12. Foster family support groups have been up and running in 4 districts for the past 7 months. These groups have experienced varied success, but attendance has been consistently low. There is a meeting in September 2003 to determine if these support groups are indeed the best way to support resource families and to plan next steps. All 12 districts are holding monthly foster parent association meetings and offer support to foster parents during this time. These support groups are tailored to meet the needs of foster parents in each district. Some combine trainings with the monthly meetings and others invite speakers. Some groups have 4-5 regular attendees and others have as many as 15. The Breakthrough Series will bring additional ideas for foster parents support in 2004.
13. Ten of twelve districts report they are using the Foster PRIDE Family Assessment tools. The original plan was to use these tools for about a year and then to gather and assess the tools and the process. Several adjustments have already been identified as necessary and we have some ideas from the Breakthrough Series that may influence this process. **The committee met in January 2004 to determine if the project is meeting intended goals. The family assessment tools are being used in part or in whole in all 12 districts. Resource Coordinators feel positive about the result, a more thorough “mutual assessment” process. No changes are suggested at this time, other than some reduction of redundant paperwork.**
14. SDM tools were finalized by each work group and the steering committee. After a pilot of the Caregiver Responsibility Agreement, some revisions are planned. Meetings are scheduled in March 2003. SDM tools that will help us to promote placement stability are part of Phase II. The timeframe for the completion of Phase II has been revised to 9/03. The Regional office has approved this revision. See Goal 3, benchmark #2.

The Caregiver Responsibility Agreement has been in use for over one year, for specialized foster care rates only. We are currently determining the advisability of expanding its use to standard foster care. We plan a pilot of the Level of Care Decision-making Tree in Winter 2003-4.

15. Phase I SDM Tools automated; see Goal 3. Placement and Placement stability information is incorporated into quarterly management reports and outcome reports. The reports are posted on our Intranet and available to all staff. These reports are designed as pivot tables with drill down capacity so people can analyze information at case level.
16. Social worker contact guidelines were established in Phase I of SDM. The level of risk determines the service disposition and worker contact. We developed two sets of contact guidelines.
 - Monthly contact guidelines for intact families, families with children in custody living at home and families with children in custody placed out of home with a goal of reunification.
 - Minimum contact guidelines for children in out-of-home placement and their caregivers.
17. Division re-organization is in full swing. Personnel have approved two new job descriptions and people have moved into these positions. They are making transitions from previous job responsibilities making sure nothing falls through the cracks.
18. Personnel have approved all positions for the Division re-organization. The re-allocation is complete.
19. The re-allocation established Field Service Teams, which consist of the director, the local systems of care coordinator and the field service manager. These teams are working together to assess the needs of their districts and the services needed to meet those needs.
20. The new State System of Care Manager has started to focus on support for districts and the statewide systems of care. The three new Local System of Care Coordinators are spending time in the field and with each other to define roles and responsibilities and plan for resource development and evaluation. On July 10, 2003 the local systems of care coordinators met to discuss the Placement Stability Analysis and develop a plan to design a mechanism to identify gaps in services. The team will build on the placement stability format and take a closer look at child profiles, services received and links to stability. The estimated date for completion is 12/03. **The local systems of care coordinators, directors and community providers have been identifying local needs and developing programs to meet those needs. In addition, negotiations are taking place as existing contracts are renewed so we can be assured that we are purchasing services that will meet the needs of the children and families with whom we work.**
21. This plan will be developed once the above analysis is complete. **During the winter of 2003-2004, the Local Systems of Care Coordinators conducted an analysis of placement stability utilizing statistics on the number of moves experienced by children and youth in custody and a case study methodology to review a sample of case records for social work practice and service utilization. This analysis built on the findings of the previous Placement Stability Analysis conducted in 2001. Particular attention was paid to practice and services related to respite care, kinship care including kinship options for respite, crisis supports and behavioral consultation for resource families. The study is attached to this report.**
22. **The Analysis of Placement Stability showed us that in spite of substantial progress in this area, children still move too much. As indicated by the study we have developed a plan to:**
 - **Analyze data gathered from the SDM Risk Assessment to determine parental characteristics and behaviors that are associated with repeat maltreatment.**
 - **Implement the SDM Child Functional Survey, which will provide consistent information about the functioning of children in placement.**
 - **Continue the work of the Mental Health Assessment committee.**
23. We engaged various stakeholders (resource coordinators, supervisors and administrative assistants) in development of the new codes. We have expanded the placement change codes in order to collect more accurate information about why children move.
24. Changes have been made and implemented.

- 25. The analysis of placement change reason for the quarter January-March 2004 was incorporated into the Placement Stability Analysis. Please see that report, attached.**
26. In November 2002 the Quality Assurance Coordinator spoke with a representative from the Grandparents Group. They developed a working plan to secure input for the manual from the group. Two copies of the manual were mailed to the rep and the group will contact the QA Coordinator at the end of February with suggestions.
27. Changes to the Kinship Care manual that were identified by the Grandparents as Parents Group were made. The manual is in near- final draft form. We are currently in the process of working with a graphic designer to design a new “look and feel” for all of our division brochures and publications. The Kinship Care manual will be part of the new “line-up”. **The manual was completed and printed in March 2004.**
- 28. Distribution will occur once manual is designed and printed. The Kinship manual was distributed to all 12 districts in March 2004. A copy will be sent to the Regional Office.**
29. The following districts now have contracts or are developing contracts with local community mental health agencies to conduct assessments of children entering custody: Barre, Newport, Springfield, St. Albans, Morrisville and St. Johnsbury. **Now, eleven out of twelve districts either have a dedicated person conducting assessments on all new entrants or they are in the process of securing a contract for this service.** A work group consisting of SRS and Department of Developmental and Mental Health staff is currently working on a proposal for an assessment model for children entering custody. **They have developed a draft assessment that is a combination of the SDM Child Functional Survey and other researched assessment tools. This tool will be used by social workers to determine the level of child functioning and if additional assessments in specific areas are necessary. They are meeting on May 17th to finalize this draft tool and to develop a plan to present it to managers.**

GOAL: IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS COURT DELAYS AT ALL STAGES OF THE COURT PROCESS
 LEAD PERSON/UNIT: DIVISION DIRECTOR/COMMISSIONER; COURT ADMINISTRATOR

4B

BENCHMARK	EVALUATION METHOD	BENCHMARK DATE	MET
1. Identify and implement a strategy to reduce backlog of TPR cases pending more than four months	Strategy developed. Implementation begun.	12/01	Yes
2. Identify needs and request TA from ACF's Court Improvement Program	TA requests submitted.	Not Met New Benchmark: Quarter 8	Yes
3. Identify training needs for judges, court staff, and attorneys (including AAG) as needed to implement the Case Management Protocol	Training needs identified. Training dates set.	2/02	Yes
4. Design and distribute quarterly Data Warehouse reports to court managers and presiding judges, to be used to assess performance.	Juvenile court judge and court manager review reports. Delays are addressed on the local level.	Not met. New Benchmark: Quarter 8	See #17.
5. Develop a case management protocol for abused and neglected children placed outside of the home, with a focus on children under six.	Case management protocol designed and ready for implementation	5/02	Yes
6. Train court and legal personnel on new protocol at Judicial College, Defender General's annual institute and State's Attorney's annual training.	Trainings held	6/02	Yes
7. Train court managers and juvenile docket clerks on using Data Warehouse reports as a case management tool.	Juvenile court judge and court manager review data warehouse reports. Delays addressed on local level.	12/02	Yes
8. Case management protocol is introduced to pilot courts (and any receptive courts).	Some courts begin using case management protocol.	6/02	Yes
9. Case management protocol is introduced to all courts and is being fully used by pilot courts.	Protocol used to some extent in every court. Courts needing assistance identify needs to CIP Manager.	11/02	Yes
10. Plan and deliver TA and training, with particular focus on the Case Management Protocol.	Training completed	11/02	Yes
11. Submit proposed changes to Vermont's Title 15A to expedite foster care adoptions.	Draft language submitted to sponsoring legislator	See narrative.	N/A
12. Review TPR backlog and assess changes that were and are not effective at reducing backlog.	Dialog with courts working in backlogs. Assess progress and strategies.	4/03	Yes
13. Design a feedback mechanism for the Case Management Protocol.	A plan for soliciting and considering feedback is developed.	Benchmark eliminated	N/A
14. Assemble and act upon the feedback provided on Case Management Protocol	Feedback reviewed and decisions are made regarding revisions to be made to Protocol.	Benchmark eliminated	N/A

GOAL: IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS COURT DELAYS AT ALL STAGES OF THE COURT PROCESS LEAD PERSON/UNIT: DIVISION DIRECTOR/COMMISSIONER; COURT ADMINISTRATOR			4B
BENCHMARK	EVALUATION METHOD	BENCHMARK DATE	MET
15. Revise Case Management Protocol as needed	Court Administrator, Chief Admin. Judge, CIP Manager	Benchmark eliminated	N/A
16. Meet with four courts to gather quantitative data about use of the Case Management Protocol. (New Action Step)	All four meetings scheduled and held. Responsible Person: CIP Manager	Quarter 8	Yes
17. Develop and disseminate quarterly performance reports that combines data from Court Data Warehouse and SRS (New Action Step)	Reports are disseminated quarterly. Responsible persons: CIP Manager, 0-6 Protocol Assessment Committee	Not met New Benchmark: Quarter 8	Yes
This Goal Has Been Successfully Completed.			

1. Chittenden County Court developed the following strategies to shorten TPR timelines at their 12/01 meeting.
 - a. Early identification of paternity and notice
 - b. Identify and narrow issues for discovery and hearing from initial case plan goals
 - c. Clearly identify persons responsible and timelines for all evaluations requested
 - d. Set TPR date
 - e. Hold status conference 30 days prior to TPR

2. The Franklin Family Court CHINS Mediation Project received technical assistance from the Permanency Planning Department for Children. A series of conference calls were held during February 2004 with the following sites designated as "model" programs by the Permanency Planning for Children Department, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges:
 - February 9th: Charlotte, NC
 - February 18th: Chicago, IL
 - February 23rd: Newark, NJ and Wichita KS

The purpose of the technical assistance was to help develop the mediation project.

The VT CIP collaborated with the VT Defender General's Office to offer training on Educational Advocacy in November 2003; The National Child Welfare Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues will provide TA to VT CIP to help them identify changes in practice that could be helpful in reducing court delays. This TA has received preliminary approval but has not yet been scheduled

The Vermont CIP collaborated with the VT Defender General's Office to offer training on Educational Advocacy on November 21, 2004 in Montpelier. Speaker Kathleen McNaught of the ABA was brought to Vermont as the presenter through Court Improvement Program technical assistance.

The National Child Welfare Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues will provide TA to Vermont CIP to help the CIP identify changes in practice that could be helpful to reduce delays from case filing to initial disposition, and from TPR filing to TPR decision. This TA has received preliminary approval but is not yet in the active stage.

3. Statewide Juvenile Caseflow Management training for judges, family court managers and juvenile docket clerks was scheduled for 2/1/02. Other trainings for Judicial College week are being scheduled.
4. Some reports have been designed, but data discrepancies have been uncovered which will require extensive data cleanup by the courts. Reports have been distributed to each juvenile court judge and court manager, but the extent to which reports were reviewed is unclear. The momentum on this project is expected to suffer due to the departure of the Data Warehouse Project Manager; it is anticipated that new reports might not be available until some time this spring or summer. **(Please see number 17.)**
5. The 0-6 Permanency Protocol was developed by a PPIC (Permanency Planning Implementation Committee) task force. PPIC, a committee of the Vermont Supreme Court, is charged with improving the court system for abused and neglected children.

The Task force includes Chief Administrative Trial Court Judge, two family court judges, family court manager, juvenile's attorney, SRS Social Services Division Manager, 2 Assistant Attorneys General, Executive Director State's Attorneys Dept., Juvenile Defender, Assistant SRS Policy and Planning Chief, and Court Improvement Director.)

The Protocol is a statement of principles and procedures that are designed to bring about permanency for young children more quickly. It hinges on several key principles: Active judicial leadership, collaboration among stakeholders, early services to parties; priority scheduling & adherence to tight time frames; legal representation for parents at detention hearings.

6. Judge Pineles presented the Protocol at the Judicial College and the Defender General's training. The Protocol was presented to state's attorneys by Les Birnbaum at their June training and will be presented to all courts at a conference on 11/1/02. Key precepts of the Protocol are included in training for new Guardians ad Litem. The Protocol is not mandatory for any courts, however it is strongly recommended that every court follow its key principles.
7. Family court managers and juvenile docket clerks received training on 12/11/02 on how to read existing reports.
8. Chittenden, Rutland and Washington family courts began using the Case management protocol in the spring of 2002.
9. The 0-6 Permanency Protocol was introduced to all courts in June 2002 and "launched" statewide in November 2002. As of January 2003, the Protocol is used to some extent in every court except for Orange County. Although it is not mandatory that every court use the Protocol, it is essential that all courts follow its key principles. Courts will be surveyed in spring 2003 to see to what extent they are following the Protocol's key principles.
10. Training on the Case Management Protocol was delivered in Nov. 2002.
11. No legislative changes will be pursued as exploration of this issue led to a different resolution. The intent of this activity was to expedite foster care adoptions. The activities associated with Goal 4C have helped us to decrease our time to adoptions. We centralized and restructured the adoptions unit to include two assistants who finalize adoptions and to collaborate with the Lund Family Center. In addition to our permanency planning teams and the Project Family initiative we feel we can attain this goal without legislative changes.
12. We convened a meeting with the Chittenden Family Court TPR Scheduling Group in April to discuss the strategies that were and were not effective at reducing the TPR backlog there. We identified strategies for further reducing TPR processing time and goals to further reduce the length of time from TPR filing to decision for the 0-6 Protocol populations.

Other courts with long average length of TPR time were identified. Reports are being developed to track courts with TPRs exceeding 4 months. A report is being developed to create and reflect a "TPR Backlog Factor."

In June, a TPR Pre-Trial Scheduling Order was distributed to all courts to use in managing the TPR proceeding. This will become an on-line form for the Judiciary in summer 2003.

- 13-15. The Permanency Planning Implementation Committee's 0-6 Case Management Protocol Assessment Committee, which includes representation from SRS, has decided not to revise the Case Management Protocol. Shari Young discussed this change with Nancy Pickett in July 2003. Consistent with the plan for Court Improvement Project Re-Assessment submitted by Shari Young in June 2002, we are establishing new strategies and benchmarks, numbered 16-17.
- 16. CIP Director held discussion groups with four courts to collect feedback about implementation of the Protocol. Three of the four courts report conscious efforts to follow many of the Protocol's precepts, yet none of the courts strictly follow the Protocol. All four courts report that the Protocol was useful to give the various parts of the system a common focus and provide a structure to apply to these cases. Data show that average time to disposition for the "under 7" abuse/neglect cases has improved for all four courts interviewed. The average time to from case filing to adoption for the "under 7" abuse/neglect cases has also improved since last FY. Participating family courts were: Chittenden, Caledonia, Franklin, and Washington.**
- 17. Quarterly reports have been developed but continue to need refinement, which is an ongoing reiterative process. Additional work will be done on this as part of the CIP re-evaluation. Data sharing between SRS and the court is occurring.**

GOAL: IMPLEMENT DECISION-MAKING PROTOCOL FOR IDENTIFYING AND REVIEWING PERMANENCY GOALS LEAD PERSON/UNIT: OPERATIONS UNIT, INCLUDING ADOPTIONS UNIT AND PERMANENCY PLANNING CONSULTANT			4C
BENCHMARK	EVALUATION METHOD	BENCHMARK DATE	MET
1. Design overall strategy to promote awareness of importance of permanency to children and youth of all ages.	Recommendations published	Yes	Yes
2. Design use of teams to focus on permanency planning in advance of 11-month administrative review.	Policy drafted, reviewed and implemented	3/03	Yes
3. Schedule supervisors and managers for the new ASFA training.	Training scheduled	New Benchmark: Eighth Quarter	Yes (see Goal 2A, Item 5)
This Goal Has Been Successfully Completed.			

1. Project Family is our strategy to promote awareness of the importance of permanency for children and youth of all ages. With the help of a private consulting firm we have developed marketing tools that include a website, brochure, signs for all public buses in VT, and PSAs on 103 radio stations.
2. Once a month regional teams meet in six areas to review all children in advance of their 12-month permanency review. These teams are looking at placement stability and making sure concurrent permanency planning is happening for all children. Due to staff turnover and illnesses the Adoptions Unit has had a unique opportunity to think about approaching adoption work creatively. Currently, the Adoptions Chief is involved in discussions with upper management exploring ideas for revising adoption work and policy to reflect lessons learned from our Federal Adoptions Opportunities Grant. These lessons include:

- Involving adoption staff in cases earlier to focus on permanency.
- Supporting children and families in placements to promote healthy attachments.
- Have our new permanency consultation teams begin working with cases at the front end instead of at the 11-month point.

3. See goal 2A, Item 5.

MEASURING PROGRESS TOWARDS NATIONAL STANDARDS

Vermont will produce quarterly reports to measure progress towards outcomes for which national standards are set. Reports will be compiled and published, based on national syntax, and used to assess the success of the strategies we have selected to improve outcomes, and to determine the need for modification of our plan and strategies. In addition, we will generate reports on the adoption goals and incorporate them into our quarterly reports on the Program Improvement Plan.

If the state meets or exceeds the established goal for any two consecutive quarters during the program improvement period, it will reflect successful completion of the Program Improvement Plan and all associated penalties will be rescinded.

PERFORMANCE ON OUTCOME MEASURES

SAFETY

- Children are first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
- Children are safely maintained in their home whenever possible and appropriate.

Repeat Maltreatment

	Performance	Goal Met?
Vermont Goal for PIP	6.1%	
First Quarter (April-June 2002)	6.1%	Yes
Second Quarter (July-September 2002)	3.7%	Yes
Third Quarter (October-December 2002)	7.5%	No
Fourth Quarter (January-March 2003)	5.2%	Yes
Fifth Quarter (April-June 2003)	3.6%	Yes
Sixth Quarter (July-September 2003)	5.6%	Yes
Seventh Quarter (October –December 2003)	5.4%	Yes
Eighth Quarter (January-March 2004)	7.6%	No

The state met or exceeded the established goal for safety for two consecutive quarters during the program improvement period. This goal has been successfully completed. Associated penalties have been rescinded by the Regional Office, assuming that related program activities are completed as planned.

PERMANENCY

- Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
- The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

Reunification Within Twelve Months

	Performance	Goal Met?
Vermont Goal for PIP	67.3%	
First Quarter (April-June 2002)	66.1%	No
Second Quarter (July-September 2002)	55.8%	No
Third Quarter (October-December 2002)	71.5%	Yes
Fourth Quarter (January-March 2003)	73.8%	Yes
Fifth Quarter (April-June 2003)	80%	Yes
Sixth Quarter (July-September 2003)	64.7%	No
Seventh Quarter (October-December 2003)	72.5%	Yes
Eighth Quarter (January-March 2004)	66.7%	Yes

The state has met or exceeded the established goal for reunification for two consecutive quarters during the program improvement period. Associated penalties have been rescinded by the Regional Office, assuming that related program activities are completed as planned.

Adoptions Within Twenty-Four Months

	Performance	Goal Met?
Vermont Goal for PIP	2.5 years median time to adoption	
First Quarter (April-June 2002)	2.5 years	Yes
Second Quarter (July-September 2002)	2.5 years	Yes
Third Quarter (October-December 2002)	3.4 years	No
Fourth Quarter (January-March 2003)	2.8 years	No
Fifth Quarter (April-June 2003)	2.8 years	No
Sixth Quarter (July-September 2003)	2.1 years	Yes
Seventh Quarter (October-December 2003)	2.5 Years	Yes
Eighth Quarter (January-March 2004)	2.1 Years	Yes

The state met or exceeded the established goal for adoptions for two consecutive quarters during the program improvement period. Associated penalties have been rescinded by the Regional Office, assuming that related program activities are completed as planned.

Placement Stability in the First Twelve Months¹

	Performance	Goal Met?
Vermont Goal for PIP	71.9% for children entering between age 6 and 11	
First Quarter (April-June 2002)	83.92%	Yes
Second Quarter (July-September 2002)	74.82%	Yes
Third Quarter (October-December 2002)	71.95%	Yes
Fourth Quarter (January-March 2003)	72.97%	Yes
Fifth Quarter (April-June 2003)	76.03%	Yes
Sixth Quarter (July-September 2003)	71.01%	No
Seventh Quarter (October-December 2003)	72.97%	Yes
Eighth Quarter (January-March 2004)	80.6%	Yes

The state met or exceeded the established goal for placement stability for two consecutive quarters during the program improvement period. Associated penalties have been rescinded by the Regional Office, assuming that related program activities are completed as planned.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Eighth Quarter Outcome Reports, January-March 2004
- B. Analysis of Placement Stability (including analysis of placement change reasons)
- C. Design Document for Resource Family Database (including Matching Database)
- D. Kinship Care Guide (sent separately by US Mail)

¹ During the period January-March 2004, SRS collaborated with the John Hargrove of the Children's Bureau in a detailed analysis of the placement stability data that was included in our quarterly Outcomes at a Glance reports. As a result, we made corrections to our reports. The performance data included in this section is the revised data, as approved by Mr. Hargrove in April 2004.