SunCoast Region

Quality Assurance Annual Report and Plan

Fiscal Year 2019-2020

ANNUAL REPORT

The SunCoast Region's Quality Assurance Department is managed by the Family Safety Program Office and covers Circuits 6, 12, 13 and 20. There is one Program Manager who over sees the Program Office and all its components. The SunCoast Region (SCR) has two teams devoted to conducting quality assurance and continuous quality improvement activities. Although both teams are aligned in the Family Safety Program Office (FSPO) organizational structure, the teams are separated geographically to best meet the needs of staff. The Quality Assurance (QA) team is located at the SCR Headquarters in Tampa, and the Critical Child Safety Practice Experts (CCSPEs) are co-located with the operational staff in Lee County. Despite being located separately, the two teams work collaboratively on identifying trends and areas needing improvement, and then plan on how to best assist the field.

The collaborative approach with both teams provides flexibility and allows the teams to respond to immediate needs identified in the field. As such, there are times when the needs of the field change the focus of the QA team from their scheduled activities to assisting in the area of identified need.

The team has a QA Manager who oversees eight Operation Review Specialists (ORS). The Operations Review Specialists are the traditional quality assurance staff who are primarily utilized to conduct file reviews, child fatality QA reviews, specialized focused reviews, sheriff's office peer reviews, Children and Family Service Reviews (CFSR) alongside the Community Based Care (CBC) agencies, provide technical assistance for the Department's operational staff along with other continuous quality improvement activities. The QA Manager oversees the Regional Child Fatality Prevention Specialist who is responsible for reviewing and completing reports on all child fatalities within the region. One of these positions assists with the CFSR process and completes reviews. There is a position dedicated to human trafficking and adoption work.

The Regional Training and Staff Development Manager has oversight of the four Critical Child Safety Practice Experts (CCSPE), three pre-service and in-service training staff, one hiring coordinator and one recruitment coordinator for operational staff. The primary role of the CCSPE is to review open child protective investigations and provide guidance to child protective investigators. The CCSPEs coach and mentor staff to ensure that sufficient information is being gathered and assessed around child safety and family functioning. This guidance helps ensure child protective investigators (CPIs) are making the right decisions during the course of the protective investigation. The CCSPEs are responsible for conducting Rapid Safety Feedback (RSF) reviews and facilitating case consultations, leading case fidelity reviews, participating in Integrated Decision Team (IDT) staffings, roundtable discussions, coaching and mentoring staff and leading learning circles. The Hiring Coordinator and Recruiting Coordinator are responsible for the hiring and recruitment of operational staff in Circuits 12 (Sarasota and DeSoto counties only) and 20. The Recruiting Coordinator also completes ongoing focus groups with existing staff to collect turnover and retention data. The training staff are responsible for all pre-service classes as well as any in-service training needs identified through the CQI process throughout the year.

Training is funded through an allocated regional training budget as well as Title IV-E training funds.

PERFOMANCE IMPROVEMENT, FINDINGS, GAPS & INTERVENTION

The Annual Report and Plan is intended to report progress on the region's work toward the three primary outcome goals of safety, permanency, and well-being.   To ensure the region's established goals are met, the Quality Assurance team reviews practice trends and performance to identify areas for increased focus, opportunities for training and improvement. Everything we do must be outcome-based and solution-focused. We must analyze the data in multidimensional ways to gain an understanding of the system issues and

challenges. We then utilize analytic data to drive daily actions, improve outcomes and inform operational decision making.

A daily report is published and reviewed by management to identify emerging trends so that training and mentoring can be employed to the identified areas immediately. This management report focuses on unseen victims, cases requiring a second tier consultation, caseload levels, and implementation of present danger safety plans.

Investigations Commenced within 24 hours		
	Statewide	SunCoast
FY 2018-19 Quarter 1	99.11%	99.18%
FY 2018-19 Quarter 2	99.35%	99.38%
FY 2018-19 Quarter 3	99.40%	99.44%
FY 2018-19 Quarter 4	99.43%	99.38%

Victims Seen within 24 hours		
	Statewide	SunCoast
FY 2018-19 Quarter 1	87.58%	88.59%
FY 2018-19 Quarter 2	89.26%	90.08%
FY 2018-19 Quarter 3	90.08%	90.30%
FY 2018-19 Quarter 4	90.97%	90.65%

The Monthly Key Indicator report is reviewed upon publication to monitor the child victims seen within 24 hours including stratification by Circuit and Sheriff's Office. This information is vital when meeting with our partners and stakeholders to discuss successes and barriers specific to an area within the region. The Key Indicator report is also analyzed for trends within investigations completed and recurrence of verified maltreatment within 12 months.

The proportion of the youngest children (ages 0 to 5) in need of permanency, and their length of time in out of home care, is an area of importance to the SunCoast Region leadership. The Department, in collaboration with its Community-based Care partners, is continuing efforts to reduce the number of children ages five and under in shift care placements, and increase developmentally appropriate treatment options. These efforts improve well-being and normalcy for children, while also enhancing permanency.

On-going efforts to place children ages five and under in a more family-like setting have been ongoing during this past year. The QA team compiles weekly roll up reports which highlight each child in this placement setting and strategies being employed to move the child to a more family like setting. There are also monthly phone calls to discuss each of these children. The goal is to draw attention to placement options for these children, to improve timely permanency for children in care, and reduce group care expenditures, allowing us to invest in other parts of our system of care. While this effort began with a focus on children ages 0 to 5 it has since expanded to include all children ages 0 to 11 years old.

Group Care Placement - Children Age 0 to 5			
As of 4/1/19	Children in Congregate Care	Total Children Aged 0 to 5 in Out of Home Care	Percentage
Circuit 6	7	1202	0.64%
Circuit 12	2	517	0.39%
Circuit 13	18	1284	1.40%
Circuit 20	1	713	0.14%
SunCoast Region	**28**	**3716**	**0.75%**

Group Care Placement - Children Age 0 to 5			
As of 8/27/19	Children in Congregate Care	Total Children Aged 0 to 5 in Out of Home Care	Percentage
Circuit 6	7	1211	0.58%
Circuit 12	2	512	0.39%
Circuit 13	10	1231	0.81%
Circuit 20	4	718	0.56%
SunCoast Region	**23**	**3672**	**0.63%**

As of April 30, 2019, the SunCoast region had 235 children ages 0 to 11 in Residential Group Care. As of August 27, 2019, the number of children in this placement setting had been reduced to 203.

Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) and CQI data are reviewed regularly to ensure the region is responsive to emerging trends and areas for improvement. CFSR and CQI reviews are analyzed in real time and following each reporting period. The SunCoast region has performed above the statewide averages in many of the items on the CFSR. Despite this accomplishment, there remains many opportunities for improvement as a region. Data analysis and evaluation of performance trends assists the region where to focus ongoing efforts.

Item	Outcome	Target	July-December 2017 (RP1)	October 2017-March 2018 (RP2)	January - June 2018 (RP3)	April - September 2018 (RP4)	July - December 2018 (RP5)	October 2018 - March 2019 (RP6)	January - June 2019 (RP7)	↑/↓ From Previous Rolling 6 Month Reporting Period	Regional Current % Away from Target	Most Recent Statewide Performance (RP7)	Statewide Current % Away from Target
1	Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment	91.50%	90.00%	77.80%	90.00%	90.90%	83.30%	78.60%	87.50%	↑	-4.00%	88.14%	-3.40%
2	Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry	85.80%	83.30%	80%	100%	83.30%	87.50%	100%	100%	-	14.20%	78.79%	-7.00%
3	Risk and Safety Assessment and Management	77.70%	79.00%	89.50%	100%	79.00%	79.00%	94.70%	89.47%	↓	11.80%	63.75%	-14.00%
4	Stability of Foster Care Placement	88.50%	64.30%	85.70%	92.90%	78.60%	78.60%	85.70%	85.71%	-	-2.80%	80%	-8.50%
5	Permanency Goal for Child	82.10%	78.60%	92.90%	85.70%	64.30%	71.40%	85.70%	92.86%	↑	10.80%	72.73%	-9.40%
6	Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement	75.40%	78.60%	78.60%	57.10%	77.00%	57.10%	71.40%	85.71%	↑	10.30%	65.45%	-10.00%
12	Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents	58.40%	63.20%	73.70%	68.40%	42.10%	42.10%	73.70%	78.95%	↑	20.60%	48.75%	-9.70%
13	Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning	70.70%	77.80%	94.10%	94.40%	77.80%	58.80%	76.50%	82.35%	↑	11.70%	61.04%	-9.70%
14	Caseworker Visits with Child	78.90%	57.90%	57.90%	79.00%	89.50%	94.70%	94.70%	84.21%	↓	5.30%	77.50%	-1.40%
15	Caseworker Visits with Parents	51.10%	37.50%	62.50%	77.80%	58.80%	40.00%	46.70%	50.00%	↑	-1.10%	43.66%	-7.40%

Item	Outcome	Target	July-December 2017 (RP1)	October 2017-March 2018 (RP2)	January - June 2018 (RP3)	April - September 2018 (RP4)	July - December 2018 (RP5)	October 2018 - March 2019 (RP6)	January - June 2019 (RP7)	↑/↓ From Previous Rolling 6 Month Reporting Period	CFSR Baseline Performance (Statewide)	Regional Current % Away from Baseline	Most Recent Statewide Performance (RP7)
7	Placement with Siblings	NA	88.90%	87.50%	81.80%	72.70%	63.60%	66.70%	70%	↑	85%	-15%	78.57%
8	Visiting with Parents and Siblings in Foster Care	NA	71.40%	83.30%	75.00%	76.90%	80.00%	87.50%	80%	↓	69%	11%	54.17%
9	Preserving Connections	NA	92.90%	100%	85.70%	85.70%	78.60%	78.60%	85.71%	↑	82%	3.70%	74.55%
10	Relative Placement	NA	85.70%	92.90%	92.90%	78.60%	78.60%	92.90%	100%	↑	72%	28%	74.55%
11	Relationship of Child in Care with Parents	NA	69.20%	81.80%	66.70%	41.70%	22.20%	37.50%	70%	↑	60%	10%	51.11%
16	Educational Needs of the Child	NA	91.70%	90.00%	81.80%	90.90%	100%	100%	100%	–	92%	8%	77.08%
17	Physical Health of the Child	NA	86.70%	86.70%	80.00%	68.80%	75.00%	93.30%	93.33%	-	85%	8.30%	81.97%
18	Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child	NA	77.80%	75.00%	37.50%	42.90%	90.00%	91.70%	80%	↓	72%	8%	59.57%

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Recognizing the importance of maintaining children in the most family like setting following a removal episode and its documented impact on children's well-being, the SCR studied the initial placement of children in Circuits 6 and 13. Placements were identified as being with a relative/non-relative and those placed in a licensed setting.

Pasco County:

Year	Total Removals	Total Initially Placed Rel/Non-Rel	Total Initially Placed Residential/FC	% Placed Rel/Non-Rel	% Placed Residential/FC
2016	481	197	249	41.0%	51.8%
2017	542	222	269	41.0%	49.6%
2018	439	180	229	41.0%	52.2%
2019	240	127	97	52.9%	40.4%

Pinellas County:

Year	Total Removals	Total Initially Placed Rel/Non-Rel	Total Initially Placed Residential/FC	% Placed Rel/Non-Rel	% Placed Residential/FC
2016	670	352	250	52.5%	37.3%
2017	638	353	216	55.3%	33.9%
2018	611	328	233	53.7%	38.1%
2019	453	185	222	40.8%	49.0%

Hillsborough County:

Year	Total Removals	Total Initially Placed Rel/Non-Rel	Total Initially Placed Residential/FC	% Placed Rel/Non-Rel	% Placed Residential/FC
2016	1851	818	864	44.20%	46.70%
2017	1659	668	808	40.30%	48.70%
2018	1464	548	707	37.40%	48.30%
2019	809	270	392	33.40%	48.50%

The study involved potential areas impacting the initial placement of children and barriers to placement with relatives/non-relatives. Barriers included: Out of Town Inquiry (OTI) requests not being completed timely by other counties, potential placements not fully explored resulting in children being placement into licensed care, lack of documented attempts, failure to explore the other parent for possible placement, large sibling groups.

The positive impacts with Pasco County were observed to determine if the results could be reproduced in other areas. It was determined that Pasco County made this an area of focus and re-trained staff to ask the right questions at the time of removal. Focus and accountability was put on the managers to be more heavily involved with removals. A 'Relative/Non-Relative Support Form' was implemented. Pasco County Sheriff's Office strengthened their relationships with surrounding counties to remove barriers when OTI requests were made. Partnerships with other stakeholders such as the Guardian Ad Litem were strengthened. The Program Administrator level approval was needed before any requests were made for a licensed bed. All placement options had to be explored and exhausted before licensed care was approved. As a result of this initiative, there has been a steady decline in the number of children in a licensed home setting.

ANNUAL PLAN

The SCR is diverse as evidenced by the many agencies who work in partnership. The region is comprised of four Community Based Care (CBC) lead agencies, four counties where sheriff's offices conduct child abuse investigations and seven additional counties where child abuse investigations are conducted by the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Each of the four circuits (6, 12, 13, and 20) is unique and diverse in the population it serves. Circuits 6 and 13 are the most populated areas serving the most children and families, and all child abuse investigations are completed by the local sheriff's offices. Circuit 12 investigations are divided between DCF and the Manatee County Sheriff's Office (MCSO), while in Circuit 20 all child abuse investigations are completed by DCF.

There are six DCF Child Protective Investigation (CPI) units located in Circuit 12 and an additional 19 DCF CPI units in Circuit 20 with 118 CPI positions, two Field Support Consultant positions, 22 Senior CPI positions and 25 CPI Supervisor positions. The Safe Children's Coalition (SCC) provides case management oversight in Circuit 12 while the Children's Network of Southwest Florida (CNSWFL) provides case management oversight for Circuit 20. Eckerd Connects has oversight of case management services in both Circuit 6 and 13. Children's Legal Services (CLS) provides the legal representation for Circuits 12 and 20, the State Attorney's Office (SAO) provides legal representation for Circuit 6 and the Office of Attorney General (OAG) provides legal representation for Circuit 13.

DCF Monthly Investigations and Special Conditions Received FY18/19

Intakes Received Per Month per Circuit														
Circuit	Jul-18	Aug-18	Sep-18	Oct-18	Nov-18	Dec-18	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Monthly Average	Yearly Total
Circuit 12	209	278	284	264	226	184	237	260	219	278	271	164	240	2,874
Circuit 20	700	854	855	1018	866	669	940	940	745	954	976	659	848	10,176

The SunCoast Region's turnover rates are monitored to determine trends of employee retention, employee satisfaction and the effectiveness of the recruitment process. From July 2018 to June 2019 there were 69.64% of CPI and 10.26% of Senior CPI positions which experienced turnover. The statewide average for CPI turnover during this same period was 48.10%. Regional management is aware of this issue and has made this a priority in the coming year. The Region's high turnover with CPIs during last fiscal year can be attributed to four main reasons: work/life balance, opportunities for higher pay, lack of promotional/advancement opportunities and pursuing educational goals. Most of the turnover in the past year occurred in Circuit 12 following changes in leadership. This area needed stabilization and these changes should assist in decreased turnover in the coming year.

DCF CPI and Supervisor Separations FY18/19

	Total
Child Protective Investigators	78
Senior Child Protective Investigators	2
Child Protective Investigators Supervisors	0

Turnover FY18/19

% of Child Protective Investigators	69.64%
% of Senior Child Protective Investigators	10.26%
% of Child Protective Investigators Supervisors	0%

Based on the exit interview data, Operations created specialized units to address the turnover and to increase opportunities for staff. In Circuit 12, a Drug Endangered Child unit was created to target the most vulnerable population of children under the age of one involving any maltreatment of substance abuse. In Circuit 20, a night unit was formed to receive immediate intakes between 3pm and 12am Monday through Friday. This unit has assisted in reducing the stress of being on call for long periods of time. The staff in the unit receive incentive pay due to the unit working non-traditional hours. Each of these specialized units have provided more support for newer staff as they transition into the field, work life balance by shortening the number of on call shifts staff are required to work each month and providing specialized training and opportunities for staff. This year there are plans to expand the night unit to Circuit 12 after its success in Circuit 20.

The coordinated approach of the SCR QA team has been beneficial and aided in the complexities of the Region as evidenced by; an excellent working relationship with the four sheriff's offices who conduct child abuse investigations, enhanced communication with the CBCs, and an integrated continuous quality improvement strategy that begins at the point of hire through ongoing professional development. The SCR FSPO is highly involved in CBC foster care licensing audits, adoption subsidy requests, missing children and human trafficking matters and also has representation during the statutorily required sheriff's office peer review process.

The Region's QA Unit has maintained a positive relationship with the four lead agencies, Eckerd Connects, Eckerd Community Alternatives, Sarasota YMCA and Children's Network of SW Florida. There is regular sharing of information, staff jointly attend quarterly CQI meetings and jointly complete the CFSR case reviews. The Region's CFSR/PIP lead has assumed oversight responsibility for the implementation and execution of the Region's individualized PIP progress plan.

The QA Manager attends all of the community alliance meetings as well as the contract meetings with the CBCs to discuss the federal Program Improvement Plan (PIP) that the state is currently involved in. The purpose of attending these meetings is to engage the community and stakeholders with the PIP process and to share updates related to statewide and regional performance.

Collaboration with stakeholders is an integral part of the success of the SCR. A variety of stakeholders from across the child welfare spectrum are collaborative partners with the region including the judiciary, child advocates, community based lead agencies, State Attorney's Office, Tribes, foster/kinship caregivers, law enforcement, Child Protection Teams, school systems, community alliances, substance abuse and mental health professionals as well as others. The expertise of the stakeholders provides for an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of current processes and make recommendations for sustainable solutions to maximize child safety, permanency and wellbeing.

Collaborative activities occur in both an informal and structured format, i.e., meetings, conference calls and impromptu technical assistance. The Department participates in performance data calls, family safety alliances in multiple counties, safe sleep coalitions, drug endangered children alliances, meetings with domestic violence partners and substance exposed newborn initiatives. There are behavioral health and domestic violence advocates co-located in the CPI offices who are available for staff to utilize their expertise. Finally, the Department is committed to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Integration project in all Circuits.

Schedule of Activities

During the FY19/20, the QA team will continue utilizing the Results Oriented Accountability reports, the monthly Key Indicator Reports and other available Results Oriented Accountability (ROA) reports to drive continuous quality improvement (CQI) activities and projects. The QA team will also focus efforts to analyze the data and improve performance based on the CFSR data, Peer Review outcomes and local Tableau reports. The focus of these activities will be to provide operations with vital information needed to drive performance improvement and practice. The QA team will also participate in the ongoing CFSR PIP process with the Community Based Care (CBC) lead agencies and participate in the sheriff's office peer review process.

The QA team will have at least bi-quarterly meetings with the quality departments of each of the four (4) CBCs during the year to discuss progress on the Program Improvement Plan (PIP). These meetings will include the reviewers from each CBC as well as the reviewers from DCF and will help facilitate relationships and continuity in the review process.

The QA team will continue the Regional Drug Endangered Child protocol. Every child with a substance exposed newborn maltreatment type will have a specialized review completed by a member of the QA team. The QA staff will participate in a supervisory consultation with the intent of ensuring the most appropriate safety actions are taken in these investigations. In addition, the QA team will also complete specialized reviews of any investigation involving a child under the age of one (1) with any substance related maltreatment. The QA staff will review the investigation at approximately fourteen (14) days into the investigation and determine if there is a need for a consultation with the supervisor. These are strategies to improve decision making around this highly vulnerable population.

The Region will also continue to look at children age 0-11 who are placed into congregate care. A protocol was developed and sent to the CBCs informing them of the need to notify regional leadership prior to placing any children age 0-5 in congregate care. In addition, monthly staffings are held that include members from the CMO, CBC and DCF regarding each child remaining in group care. The intent is to place focus on this population of children to move children out of congregate care and into a more family like setting.

The QA team will conduct random case reviews for individual units and investigators to provide management with empirical data to support ongoing operations.

The QA team will continue to review all child fatalities to identify emerging trends and potential improvements to the practice model. All deaths will be reviewed and documented with a fatality summary. Additionally, a mini-CIRRT will be conducted on cases in which there is a current child death and the Department has had reports on the family in the past five years. The focus of these reviews is the processes of practice, organization and service array during the last opportunity the Department worked with the family prior to the death case.   criteria for a mini-CIRRT or child fatality summary.

The CCSPE Team will continue to complete 100% of all RSF case reviews meeting tier 1 or 2 criteria. In addition, the team will also complete closed case reviews of 25% of cases that received a "not rated" for items 5- 9 on the open case RSF tool.

The CCSPE Team will also be developing and delivering training and learning circles to Frontline, Supervisory, and Program Administrator Staff to enhance the knowledge and skills around the practice model. Each training is developed based on trends and data found through RSF case reviews. Also, the CCSPE team will be working with Supervisory and Program Administrator staff to prepare them for their prospective proficiency processes.

In addition to this, the CCSPE team will work closely with the QA team as they complete their proficiency process this year. QA staff will be paired with a CCSPE to listen and complete side by side reviews to ensure they are equipped to successfully complete their proficiency process.

The QA team will conduct file reviews of all cases closed with verified findings of maltreatment to determine the level of services implemented. The goal is to reduce the number percentage of children with a verified abuse report who have had a verified finding in the prior twelve months. This goal aligns with the statewide goal to reduce re-entry from 7.4% to 3%.

Protected from Abuse and Neglect - No Recurrence of Maltreatment			
	Target	Statewide	SunCoast
FY 2018-19 Quarter 1	90.90%	92.17%	91.56%
FY 2018-19 Quarter 2	90.90%	92.09%	91.90%
FY 2018-19 Quarter 3	90.90%	92.53%	92.44%
FY 2018-19 Quarter 4	90.90%	92.91%	92.89%

Scheduled Trainings

Training needs for staff are determined by data analytics of Rapid Safety Feedback data, closed case reviews, QA Fatality Reviews, CPI Scorecard analysis, CFSR results and staff feedback. Training needs have been identified however training courses have not yet been scheduled due to budgetary concerns.

Strategies to Improve Practice

During FY 2018-19 the Region focused on the Performance Improvement Plan that addressed improvements and practice initiatives from the investigative level, case management, the lead agency and stakeholders. The Region's PIP lead and QA Manager have attended several trainings and meetings with the Lead agencies and stakeholders. In addition, other strategies are in place to improve practice:

- CFSR training
- PIP debriefings
- QA Team attendance at All Staff Meetings for Operations staff
- Review of data to identify trends and deficiencies
- Integration of QA staff with Operations to aide in continual learning
- Special reviews completed by the ORS or CCSPE on complex cases
- Conduct reviews of CPIS reviews for best practice standards
- Specialized review and consultation on all Substance Exposed Newborns and Drug Endangered Children cases

- Closed case reviews on cases with verified findings of maltreatment and services implemented
- Review of all removal episodes that result in placement in licensed care
- Focused attention on children ages 0 to 11 in residential group care and efforts to place in a more family-like setting.
- Full desk reviews of children under services whose living arrangement is living with biological parent, relative or non-relative and open to case management.

It is the SunCoast Region's belief that these actions and continued work by our team members will lead to continuous practice improvements and ultimately to better outcomes for the children and families we serve.