

MARSHA TAYLOR INTERVIEW

REVIEWER

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today and for letting me come to your home for this interview, Ms. Taylor. I know you were given some information about this case review process, but just as a reminder, what we are doing is conducting a review of the services provided to children and families by the Mock State Department of Children and Families. The goal of the review is to provide feedback to the Department of Children and Families about how they can make improvements in their system so that children and families have the best outcomes. I'm here to ask you about the kinds of services you received while your case was open, so October 2013 through May of 2014, when your case was closed. I want to talk about what your experiences were as you worked with the agency. The information you share with me is confidential and will not be shared with your caseworker, so it will not have any impact on your case. I want to encourage you to be open and honest with me as I ask you questions because your feedback is a very important part of this review process. I understand that some of these questions or topics may be difficult to talk about, so please feel free to respond in whatever way you are most comfortable with, and if you prefer not to answer a question, just let me know. I also wanted to mention that I will be taking notes during our interview. Before we begin, do you have any questions about the interview or the review process?

MARSHA TAYLOR

Ms. Diaz explained this to me when she called and told me about the review, so no, I don't have any questions. She asked me about meeting with Claire too. I told her that I didn't want to take Claire out of school and that Claire has had enough people talking to her. I don't want to upset or worry her.

REVIEWER

Sure, I understand. Well, let's get started. Can you tell me why you believed the Department was involved with your family?

MARSHA TAYLOR

Yeah, I'm pretty sure my neighbor reported me because she said that I wasn't watching Cara—that's my youngest—like I should be. She didn't like the way I was raising my children. She didn't know how tough it was being a single parent with two children and no help.

REVIEWER

When the Department first contacted you, did they explain the reason for their involvement and why they decided to open up a case?

MARSHA TAYLOR

I think they called it a neglect case which is crazy. I never neglected my kids! I didn't have any financial assistance or food stamps at the time so I couldn't feed my kids as much as they wanted. Is that neglect? It's not like they were starving! They also said something about the kids being left alone or unsupervised.

REVIEWER

What did the caseworker tell you about the risk and safety concerns they identified?

MARSHA TAYLOR

The caseworker thought I wasn't watching the girls like I should be. Neither the first caseworker nor the second one thought that Claire was able to keep an eye on Cara from time to time. They also thought the house wasn't as clean as it should be. I don't think my kids were ever unsafe or at risk though. I love my girls and take good care of them. It's just hard doing it on my own. Everybody needs support now and then, you know?

REVIEWER

Yes, I agree, it's really important to have support when you are raising children! When I took a look at the case record, I noticed that a safety plan was developed for you. Can you tell me about the plan and what it was supposed to do?

MARSHA TAYLOR

The first caseworker told me I needed to watch Cara better, and that I shouldn't be leaving Claire and Cara alone. I had to clean up the house. He also wanted me to go do a UA. That was the safety plan he said I had to do to keep the children. I'm not sure how he thought I could do all of that at the same time—but I said I would.

REVIEWER

I saw by looking in the case record that there was another safety plan developed in November. Can you tell me why there was the second plan and what was different from the first plan?

MARSHA TAYLOR

It was pretty much the same as the first one that I had—except the second one had my sister in it. But she was helping me out all along. So at the meeting she told the caseworker that she could be a help for me and my girls and she would help me watch them.

REVIEWER

How did the caseworker make sure you were following this plan?

MARSHA TAYLOR

My second caseworker, Kerry, visited me at home to check in on me. I think she also talked with Anita. Anita was my parent support specialist who would come to the house and help me out with things.

REVIEWER

Thanks for that information; it helps me better understand. I'd like to move on to a different area and talk about your girls, Claire and Cara. They were 10 and 2 back when your case was open. What kinds of services did your children receive?

MARSHA TAYLOR

My girls really didn't get any services. They did help me get some clothes for Claire and did help me get some things for the girls around the holidays so that the girls had a nice Christmas. Oh, yeah, and they did help me get the assessment for Cara to help with her development.

REVIEWER

Sounds like you appreciated being able to have a nice holiday for your girls. That assessment for Cara you mentioned—was that service helpful?

MARSHA TAYLOR

It was good to get that assessment done. I think my Cara is doing okay now. She is walking and talking. I guess some children just need more time than others—they're all different.

REVIEWER

Yes children certainly are. Let's talk a little bit about you now. Did the worker ever ask you about your family background, questions about your history and childhood, to get to know you better?

MARSHA TAYLOR

No, they never asked me those kinds of questions. They only asked me stuff like how I watched the children, what kind of support I had, did I get child support or assistance and if I used drugs. And they asked about the girls' father. I answered all of their questions.

REVIEWER

Okay. I see in the case record that you received parent support services. Can you tell me about that and what you felt that service did for you?

MARSHA TAYLOR

Anita was my parent support specialist. She came almost every week although I missed some weeks because I was busy with other appointments and such. I guess the service was good because Anita helped me straighten up the house and got us some food from the pantry and help with utilities. But she had me go through this workbook on parenting. It was kind of hard to understand. Lots of words and I'm not a big reader. It was more helpful when Anita would show me things to do with the girls.

REVIEWER

Did either Ms. Diaz or Anita follow up with you about those times when you missed your meetings?

MARSHA TAYLOR

Anita did. She would leave me a note asking to call and if I got busy and didn't call her in a day or so, she would call me and we would reschedule. And I could always call her and reschedule if I needed to.

REVIEWER

Did the caseworker, Ms. Diaz, follow up with you to find out if services were helpful?

MARSHA TAYLOR

No. Well, maybe. Just before the Department closed my case they did ask me if I like the service. And I did like Anita, so I told them yes.

REVIEWER

You mentioned a parenting workbook. Did you share with Ms. Diaz or Anita that the workbook was difficult to understand?

MARSHA TAYLOR

No. Anita would sometimes talk to me about it when she came over to the house or when she would take me for TANF appointments. But I didn't want to let her know it was hard to understand. It was just better when she could show me, rather than have me read about it.

REVIEWER

Were there things that you needed to help you care for Claire and Cara that the Department did not provide?

MARSHA TAYLOR

I could have used more help with transportation to some of Cara's appointments. Sometimes the worker or Anita took me places, but that wasn't always. And they made such a big deal that Claire couldn't babysit Cara but they didn't understand I didn't have other options. I could have used help with child care so I didn't have to ask my sister all the time. It's not easy to burden your family always.

REVIEWER

Did you ask the worker about getting help with child care?

MARSHA TAYLOR

I did ask Ms. Diaz about that early on. She said that I wasn't eligible because I wasn't working.

REVIEWER

I see that you attended a Family Team Meeting and a case plan was developed. Can you talk with me about what that was like?

MARSHA TAYLOR

They had me come to that meeting at their office. My sister came with me, and I'm glad she did. At the meeting they told me what my problems were and what I had to do to keep my girls. They had me sign something—actually two things. I talked with my sister about it afterwards. She said that we should do whatever the Department wanted so they wouldn't take the girls away and that she would help me.

REVIEWER

During the Family Team Meeting did you get a chance to ask questions, give them additional information or make suggestions?

MARSHA TAYLOR

There wasn't really a chance for that. I didn't think I should be saying a whole lot. I felt like I better just listen. I didn't understand everything that they were talking about and I was scared—I didn't want them to take my girls. It was only my sister and me there with all these Department workers and their supervisors.

REVIEWER

I understand why you said you were glad that your sister came with you. In looking at the case record, I see that there is a case plan besides the safety plan we talked about earlier. What was your understanding of the purpose of that case plan?

MARSHA TAYLOR

I wasn't sure why I had to have all of those plans because I think they were really about the same things: taking care of my girls—which I was doing—supervising my girls, and cleaning my house.

REVIEWER

Thank you, it is really helpful for me to understand your point of view. I'd like to move to a different area and talk about your visits with your caseworker, Ms. Diaz. How often did Ms. Diaz visit with you?

MARSHA TAYLOR

It seems like she came over to the house a lot in the beginning, like every week, but then it dropped off. Her supervisor came by over the holidays when Kerry was on vacation. Sometimes she would just call. I didn't see much of her until right before my case was closed.

REVIEWER

When you did visit with Ms. Diaz, what did you two talk about?

MARSHA TAYLOR

I guess she was mainly checking up on me, seeing that I was doing what she said I had to. She would tell me to go do UAs sometimes. She made sure the girls had food and that the house looked clean.

REVIEWER

During the time your case was open, how often did Ms. Diaz visit with Claire and Cara?

MARSHA TAYLOR

She would sometimes visit with the girls when she came to the house to visit me. Mostly she saw Cara. But she didn't really do anything with her, like play with her or anything. Claire was usually in school when she came so she hardly saw her. Claire didn't really like to talk to her anyway. She said she was afraid of "that lady."

REVIEWER

Did she talk with Claire alone when she visited?

MARSHA TAYLOR

No, not really. I mean, she never asked to do that. Usually she just talked with Claire while she was doing her homework. She never stayed too long when she visited.

REVIEWER

Well, speaking of homework, did you have any concerns about Claire and school during the time you were working with the Department?

MARSHA TAYLOR

I had to make sure that Claire got to school. The school was worried about Claire's grades. They wanted me to go and talk with them but I had to watch Cara and besides, I didn't know how to help her. I don't think her grades were too bad; she passed her classes.

REVIEWER

Did the agency offer to help you with monitoring or supporting Claire in school?

MARSHA TAYLOR

No, they just wanted me to take care of it.

REVIEWER

And I saw that there was mention of Claire needing some dental work. Can you tell me about a dental appointment Claire needed?

MARSHA TAYLOR

Oh yeah, Claire's fine.

REVIEWER

So was Claire able to see the dentist?

MARSHA TAYLOR

I'll probably take her soon.

REVIEWER

What about services for Cara?

MARSHA TAYLOR

Like I said, Cara got her assessment and they let me know how I could continue with services. Cara is walking more and talking a whole lot more. She's doing great. She's with my sister now, otherwise you could see for yourself.

REVIEWER

Okay, well, we're almost done. Just one or two more questions. Can you describe for me what happened when your case was closed?

MARSHA TAYLOR

Ms. Diaz came over to the house and said I made progress. My sister and I told her that we could handle it from now on, which we have. Then later she called me and told me my case was closed.

REVIEWER

I think that covers all the questions I had. Is there anything else you would like me to know about your experience?

MARSHA TAYLOR

I appreciated the help that Anita gave me and the girls. And this whole thing helped me and my sister get closer, so that was good.

REVIEWER

I want to thank you, Marsha, for your time, the information you've provided and welcoming me into your home. Hearing from the families receiving the services is really important and helps the Department to improve the quality of services being provided to children and families here in Mock State.

ADAM DAVIS INTERVIEW

NARRATOR/REVIEWER

The interview is conducted by telephone with the father as Mr. Davis resides in another county and the distance prohibited an in-person interview. The reviewer has already introduced himself/herself, provided an overview of the review process, reassured Mr. Davis of confidentiality, explained the interviewer's neutrality, and thanked him for his participation. The reviewer asked Mr. Davis if he had any questions and Mr. Davis said that he did not.

REVIEWER

Let's get started. I understand that back last October, an investigator from the Department contacted you about your children. Can you tell me what you remember about the conversation you had?

ADAM DAVIS

The investigator, Ben Thomas—I wrote down his name—called me to tell me that the Department got a report on my kids.

REVIEWER

Do you recall what Mr. Thomas said the report was about?

ADAM DAVIS

He said Marsha wasn't watching Cara and she was wandering around outside. He also said that Marsha left Claire and Cara alone for long periods of time and they went to a neighbor's house. He said that the house was not safe and they didn't have food.

REVIEWER

Did Mr. Thomas ask you any questions about the situation?

ADAM DAVIS

Not too many. He wanted to confirm that I didn't live there and hadn't in a while. He asked me when was the last time I saw the girls. He asked if Marsha and I ever had domestic violence. He asked me about child support...oh, and he asked me if Marsha used drugs.

REVIEWER

What did you tell him?

ADAM DAVIS

I told him that I hadn't seen the girls for a while—months. Last time I was at the house Marsha said if I didn't leave she was going to call the police, so I haven't been back. As far as domestic violence, Marsha and I never got physical but we got loud. Told him that I haven't been able to pay child support lately because I just started working again. And I told him that Marsha liked to party with her friends. When we were together she would sometimes just take off for days. Not sure what she was up to.

REVIEWER

Did he talk with you about the Department's concerns for the girls' safety?

ADAM DAVIS

Yes. He said that the Department thought the girls were not safe because they weren't being supervised, the house was a mess, and there wasn't enough food.

REVIEWER

Did Mr. Thomas talk with you about what might happen because the Department thought Claire and Cara were not safe?

ADAM DAVIS

He said the Department would work with our family so Claire and Cara could be safe and stay in the home. I told him I wanted to help and that I wanted to be there for my girls.

REVIEWER

Did you offer to do anything specific to help make your girls safe?

ADAM DAVIS

Yes! I told him that the girls could come live with me and my folks. I had moved in with them and I was sure that my parents would help. I told him that Marsha wouldn't like that idea. We didn't part on great terms.

REVIEWER

Did you suggest anything else to help make your girls safe?

ADAM DAVIS

As I said, I was working again and had caught up on my bills. I told Mr. Thomas that I would send Marsha some money for the kids so she could buy food. I've been sending her money every month since then.

REVIEWER

What did Mr. Thomas say about how the safety concerns for Claire and Cara would be addressed?

ADAM DAVIS

He said that the Department was going to make a safety plan with Marsha and he had some ideas about what that would be.

REVIEWER

What was your understanding of the safety plan?

ADAM DAVIS

Mr. Thomas said that the safety plan had these things that Marsha would have to do, like clean up the house and not leave the girls alone, and that the Department was going to check up on her to make sure it happened.

REVIEWER

So I have a few more questions – can we keep going?

ADAM DAVIS

Sure.

REVIEWER

Did Mr. Thomas ask you questions about yourself, like your family background, what your childhood was like—things like that?

ADAM DAVIS

Yes. We actually talked for a while about all of that, especially my folks, because I was living with them. We also talked about my girls and what kinds of things I would do with them when we lived together, how I would care for them when Marsha took off. I'd miss work—it was the reason I lost a couple of my jobs.

REVIEWER

Did you have any discussion with Mr. Thomas about anything you needed to be able to care for your children?

ADAM DAVIS

We didn't talk about anything I needed—well, except that I really wanted to see my girls. I thought that something was going to happen with that. Ben told me that there would be a new worker on the case who would follow up with me, but nothing ever happened. I don't know why. I tried calling him, but I could never get ahold of him and I couldn't find out who had the case.

REVIEWER

I appreciate you spending this time with me. Your input is really an important part of this process and can help Mock State improve its services to children and families. Is there anything that we haven't touched upon that you would like me to know?

ADAM DAVIS

Well, I appreciate you listening to me. And I guess I would want you and the Department to know that I still would like to have regular contact with my girls.

REVIEWER

I can understand your desire to see your children. However, as we talked about earlier, I serve as a neutral reviewer. In my role I don't have the ability to affect your case, so I am not in a position to assist you with seeing your girls. I don't want to end this interview with you having that expectation.

ADAM DAVIS

Yes, I get it. I still appreciate you talking with me.

CASEWORKER INTERVIEW

REVIEWER

I'd like to confirm the key case participants and their roles and make sure I didn't miss any other people who may have been involved with the care of the children, or others who were living in the family home during the period under review. Marsha Taylor is the mother. Adam Davis is the father, and the children are Claire and Cara. Maternal Aunt, Doris Wilson was involved in the safety plan and helped with child care but did not live in the home. Is that all correct?

CASEWORKER

Yes, that is correct.

REVIEWER

Ok, great, before I ask you some specific questions about the case, can you provide me with a quick summary of why the Department was involved with this family?

CASEWORKER

Sure, basically it came in as a neglect case – mom left the kids unsupervised at times, she struggled to meet the children's basic needs, you know, basic poverty-related issues, and it was obvious she needed some support in caring for the children. There were some allegations of substance use by mom, but we never substantiated that. So we opened up a family preservation case in order to get a safety plan in place and get mom some supportive services. It was a pretty basic case; mom was very cooperative and complied with services so we were able to close within 6 months.

REVIEWER

Thanks for that summary. As you know, I'm reviewing the case file as part of this review process, but would appreciate if you can provide additional details about some specific practice areas. It appears based on the case record that there was a delay in initiating the investigation, specifically the investigator making face-to-face contact with Claire. Do you happen to know anything about what caused the delay?

CASEWORKER

I'm not sure, but I do know that the investigator had a high caseload. We only had one investigator at that time so he may just not have been able to get out within the timeframes.

REVIEWER

Okay. Next I'd like to talk about risk and safety assessments during the period under review. So it looks like the initial assessments of risk and safety were done by the investigator. Did you both discuss those findings when the case was transferred to you?

CASEWORKER

Yes, we had a case transfer meeting and the investigator explained that the specific safety concerns were a lack of supervision, inadequate food, and a general unsafe home environment. Cara, because of her age, was most vulnerable to the safety concerns. And I think the initial risk assessment showed moderate risk.

REVIEWER

How did the allegations of substance abuse factor in to the assessments, both initially, and then in your ongoing assessments?

CASEWORKER

Well I think initially the investigator thought that if mom was in fact using, that could be impacting her protective capacities. But I never really saw that – she never had a dirty drug screen so I could never substantiate drug use and I really don't think that was the main issue.

REVIEWER

Based on the case record documentation, it appears that mom had a number of no-shows for her drug screens. How did you factor that into your assessment?

CASEWORKER

It's really hard to draw any conclusions from a no-show so it didn't factor into my assessment, especially since I was able to observe mom in the home and there was an a parent support specialist providing services and observing mom with the kids. Mom was really compliant with the services and things got better in the home. That really was the focus for our involvement with the family.

REVIEWER

Ok, going back to the safety assessment, it looks like an initial safety plan was developed by the investigator at the end of October, but then a second plan was developed two weeks later. Can you talk about the process of developing those plans and the reason for the changes?

CASEWORKER

Sure, I do think the initial safety plan that was developed by the investigator needed to be tightened up a bit. We had concerns that mom needed a bit more support and monitoring to ensure that she was providing adequate supervision to the children, so we revised the safety plan during the family team meeting and required that mom's sister would be more involved in monitoring mom's supervision of the children. She agreed to contact us if mom was not being compliant. We also encouraged Claire to contact her Aunt if she and Cara were left home alone. Everyone agreed to the plan and I think it worked out well in keeping the kids safe.

REVIEWER

You said that Ms. Taylor's sister agreed to let the Department know if the plan wasn't being followed. Were you checking in with her periodically and was the safety plan monitored in any other way?

CASEWORKER

Ms. Taylor's sister never called to tell me about any problems and I didn't check in with her specifically other than when I would see her at the home. I would check on the plan when I conducted my visits to the home as well. The parent support specialist, Anita, was also in the home every week and I am sure she would have told me if Ms. Taylor wasn't following the plan or if there were any problems.

REVIEWER

According to the case record, it looks like the neighbor called in at least once with concerns that the children continued to be left unsupervised even after the agency's intervention. Did you have any more contact with that neighbor to check in regarding the status of the children during the period under review?

CASEWORKER

No, I did not.

REVIEWER

Ok, let's move into talking about the services that were provided to Ms. Taylor. You referred her to a parent support specialist. Was that service intended to address safety concerns?

CASEWORKER

Yes it was. The parent support specialist was really the key in helping to reduce the safety concerns. She helped Ms. Taylor with cleaning up the house and household management. She also worked with Ms. Taylor on improving her parenting so she would take better care of the children. In addition to that service, I personally helped Ms. Taylor secure TANF assistance so that she could get food stamps since we were concerned about the lack of food for the children. I also took her to a food pantry in order to ensure those immediate needs were met right away.

REVIEWER

How did you monitor Ms. Taylor's progress in the parent support services and how did you determine whether the service was effective in addressing the safety concerns?

CASEWORKER

I checked in with Ms. Taylor during home visits to see how much progress she was making. I could tell that things were improving in the home, I mean it wasn't perfect, but there were some changes. I had some contact with the service provider as well.

REVIEWER

Can you tell me more about how you got feedback on the family's progress in services?

CASEWORKER

Anita could always call me. She writes reports for all the families she works with and her agency should send them to the Department. I don't think we actually got any reports on this case though. I called to check in with her about service progress and I met with her and Ms. Taylor at the end of the case when we were getting ready to close it. She was willing to offer services for a longer period of time, but Ms. Taylor felt like she was ready to be done and I didn't see a need to extend the services so we agreed to close out.

REVIEWER

Ok, one last question about the safety plan – the one created at the Family Team Meeting. Was that plan ever updated either formally or informally?

CASEWORKER

We kept that plan in place for most of the time the case was opened. I did a safety reassessment when we were getting ready to close the case in May of 2014 using our safety

assessment tool – and it showed that none of the children were unsafe and we didn't need a safety plan.

REVIEWER

Now I'd like to move into some questions about how the family's needs were assessed in order to identify if the family could benefit from services other than those that were focused on ensuring safety. Let's start with the mother. Back in October when the case was first open, how did the Department go about assessing her needs?

CASEWORKER

Well, that was done by during the investigation by the investigator. He interviewed Ms. Taylor, and probably asked her some basic assessment questions in order to get a sense of what she needed. Since it was a pretty basic neglect case I think her needs were very obvious so it wasn't necessary to do a psychological assessment or any other in-depth assessment. Ms. Taylor was also pretty open about the help she wanted so that made assessing her needs pretty easy.

REVIEWER

When you took over the case did you conduct any further assessments of mother's needs? And did you offer any other services to her?

CASEWORKER

Sure, that happened informally, but nothing new really came up. Ms. Taylor was a single parent. She needed support and parenting skills training. She also needed some concrete services – like help with utilities because she wasn't getting child support and wasn't on any public assistance. There were concerns reported about drug use, so we tried to assess that by having her go for UAs. But we never really could prove that was a real concern. I asked her to do a substance abuse assessment but she was very reluctant and said it was too much to handle since she was already struggling to manage her parenting issues. Since this was a voluntary in-home services case I really couldn't make her go. Other than the safety services we already talked about I didn't offer any other services.

REVIEWER

I noticed that the initial risk assessment noted that mother had a history of domestic violence but subsequent assessments noted no history of domestic violence. Can you talk to me about how you assessed that with Ms. Taylor? Did you have any conversations with her about her general background and history?

CASEWORKER

Actually I think that was an error by the investigator in the initial report. I didn't specifically ask about DV, but since she didn't want the children's father to be involved it may be that there was some history. It didn't seem relevant to explore since she was no longer involved with him when the case was opened. And no, I didn't talk to her about her history. I was really focused on her current situation and getting her the help she needed right away.

REVIEWER

Ok, let's talk about Mr. Davis. I saw in the record that during a phone call with the investigator Mr. Davis talked about wanting to be a resource for his children and was interested in being involved, even hoping to see the girls. What happened after that initial discussion?

CASEWORKER

Well, Ms. Taylor didn't want him involved. He didn't live in the home, and he wasn't involved in the allegations, so he wasn't part of our case. My supervisor said I didn't have to work with him and that his involvement would be voluntary and would need to be approved by the mother who was our primary client. Since the case was only going to be open for a short time it didn't seem necessary to try to get Ms. Taylor to consider his involvement.

REVIEWER

Alright, now I'd like to talk about how the children's needs were assessed and what kinds of services they were provided. Can we start with Claire?

CASEWORKER

Sure. So with Claire, during the investigation we found out she was having some difficulties in school with attendance and poor performance. We also found out that Claire needed some dental work after checking in with the medical providers. So we put in the case plan an expectation that Ms. Taylor would follow up on these things.

REVIEWER

How did you assess whether these needs were met?

CASEWORKER

I think Claire's school performance got better with the help of the parent support specialist. I know that she wasn't missing as much school. Ms. Taylor didn't do a great job following up on homework and things, but it improved some. I talked to the school counselor to get updates. Anita, the parent support specialist, kept in contact with the school and she helped Ms. Taylor organize the household so Ms. Taylor could have more time to focus on Claire's school. I think Anita also helped Claire with homework and maybe her study habits.

REVIEWER

Did you offer any other services to support mom in meeting Claire's educational needs, maybe tutoring services or an after-school program?

CASEWORKER

No, mom already had a lot on her plate. I think Claire got what she needed.

REVIEWER

And what about the dental services? Were those needs met?

CASEWORKER

Yeah, I think so. Ms. Taylor said she was going to take her to the dentist.

REVIEWER

So, aside from educational and dental needs, what other kinds of needs did Claire have? Were any other services offered for her?

CASEWORKER

She really didn't have any other needs. She's a sweet girl, very quiet and shy. A great big sister, loves to take care of little Cara.

REVIEWER

Alright, speaking of Cara, let's talk about her now. How did the agency assess Cara's needs?

CASEWORKER

The investigator was able to tell by just watching Cara that she was delayed developmentally. When he spoke with the medical provider he was able to confirm this and found out that Ms. Taylor was supposed to have taken her in for an assessment. Once again, this was an area of neglect so we put that into the case plan as well, to make sure Ms. Taylor followed up with that. It took a little while to get the assessment results, but she did follow through.

REVIEWER

It looks like the developmental assessment determined some specific needs and it was suggested that Cara receive physical and speech therapy. Were those services provided?

CASEWORKER

I know that the parent support specialist was doing some work with Ms. Taylor to help Cara with her motor skills. I don't think any other services were provided while our case was open, but Ms. Taylor had information about where she could access those services even after our case closed and I talked with her about that. But even without those services, I had already noticed some improvements in Cara's development during the time our case was open – she was walking and talking much better.

REVIEWER

Did Ms. Taylor follow up with Cara's regular doctor appointments to ensure that she was having appropriate routine health checks?

CASEWORKER

The investigation didn't find any concerns with her keeping up with routine care for Cara, so that was not part of the case plan.

REVIEWER

Let's talk about your visits with the children. How often did you visit with the girls?

CASEWORKER

I would see Claire every couple of months and only when I could get to the house after Claire was home from school. It was hard to schedule because I didn't want to cut into the time the family worked with Anita. I ended up seeing Cara about every month when I visited with Ms. Taylor.

REVIEWER

When you did visit with Claire, did you meet with her alone? And what did you talk about?

CASEWORKER

I did meet with her alone during my first visit when I first got the case and she showed me her room. But usually I sat and talked with her while she was at the kitchen table doing her homework. It's a small house – so Ms. Taylor and Cara were usually around. I talked to her about how things were going in school mostly. I also asked her how things were going in the family and if she was left alone or having to watch Cara. She is really shy and

mostly answered with a word or two – saying things were okay or she just shrugged her shoulders. I relied more on Anita and Aunt Doris to give me updates that were relevant to the case so my visits with Claire and Cara were just basic safety and well-being checks.

REVIEWER

Did you explain to Claire why the agency was involved with her family and what your services to the family were for?

CASEWORKER

I told her it was my job to keep her safe and that we wanted to provide some support to her mom so she could take good care of her. I left it pretty general, didn't want to overwhelm her. She knew we helped her mom get food for them and she was really happy about that.

REVIEWER

Ok, and as for visits with Ms. Taylor, you mentioned visiting her monthly?

CASEWORKER

Yes, I saw her on average once a month. We have policy about that so I did my best to make sure I met that requirement. My supervisor covered for me when I was on leave over the Christmas holidays – he did the home visit. When the case first opened I visited more frequently so that I could make sure Ms. Taylor got some immediate assistance and we also wanted to monitor the safety plan. Once I knew things were stable and the parent support specialist was in place then I visited less frequently.

REVIEWER

What did you discuss during your visits with Ms. Taylor?

CASEWORKER

I talked with her about the things she was supposed to be doing for the girls, the things that were in her case plan. Made sure she was doing what she needed to do to keep her public assistance going. I would give her feedback on how the house looked - I wanted to give her positive feedback when I could.

REVIEWER

How long were your visits usually?

CASEWORKER

Usually at least 30 minutes, sometimes longer if I was transporting her somewhere.

REVIEWER

How did you engage Ms. Taylor in developing her case plan and providing input into ongoing case planning during the case?

CASEWORKER

Oh, that's what family team meetings are for. It's a state initiative we have that helps families feel like they have a voice in developing their plan. We developed the second safety plan and the case plan at the FTM. Families are encouraged to bring their support system with them so it is a very family-friendly process.

REVIEWER

Can you describe what engagement looked like for Ms. Taylor during the meeting? What kinds of questions was she asked and how did she contribute to the plan development?

CASEWORKER

Well, we had a case plan developed already and basically shared that at the meeting and Ms. Taylor agreed with our recommendations. She was asked if she had anything to add and was given an opportunity to talk about her family's strengths. She was pretty quiet, but she did have an opportunity to be involved during that meeting. Since we only had one case plan and we didn't need any changes to it, we didn't have another FTM after that initial meeting.

REVIEWER

Alright, well you've provided me with a lot of very useful information, so thank you for that. Is there anything else about the case that you think is important for me to know as I complete my review?

CASEWORKER

No, not really. I think we had a pretty decent outcome for this case. I mean sure Ms. Taylor probably could continue to use support, but our agency is really intended to provide targeted services on these short-term in-home cases and I think we were able to do that. We made sure that Ms. Taylor had better financial stability that allowed her to meet the basic needs of her children and that was huge. It was nice to see her sister come around and be a support to her as well. I think she is in a much better place now.

REVIEWER

Well, thanks again for your time and involvement in this process. We hope the review findings will be useful for you as you consider how the Department can keep improving the quality of services being provided to children and families here in Mock State.

PROVIDER INTERVIEW

NARRATOR/REVIEWER

The interview is conducted with the service provider in the Department of Children and Families office. The reviewer has already introduced himself/herself, provided an overview of the review process, reassured the provider of confidentiality, explained the interviewer's neutrality, and thanked the provider for her participation. The reviewer asked the provider if she had any questions and the provider stated she that did not.

REVIEWER

Let's get started. I have some specific questions, but before we get to those, will you give me a quick summary of your involvement with Ms. Taylor and her children?

PROVIDER

I'd be happy to. I started working with Ms. Taylor and her two girls, Claire and Cara, in mid-November of last year. I worked with the family until the beginning of May 2014. I got the referral from the Department after they substantiated neglect due to unsafe home conditions, lack of supervision, lack of resources, and mom's need for help with parenting. There was also a concern that Mom was abusing drugs. Marsha was very easy to work with on home management. I will say, she didn't seem to be "very sold" on the idea that she needed to strengthen parenting and supervision. I remember that there were a few times when I would come to work with the family, and I would find the door wide open and Cara crawling around outside with Marsha not around. I think Marsha learned she shouldn't let that happen—or at least not let it happen when I was about to show up.

REVIEWER

Thanks—that was a helpful summary. Can you help me understand the referral process—how it works and what kind of information you received about the family before you started working with them.

PROVIDER

If the Department wants us to start working with a family, they call and see if we have an open slot. We did. They send us information from their records for us to review like their risk and safety assessments and case plan. They tell us what they want us to work on with the family. My work focused on the Department's concerns about home management and parenting. At first, Marsha seemed really interested in any help I could give about how to make the home neater and safer. But then she seemed less interested, and either canceled or missed our appointments.

REVIEWER

Canceled or missed? How often did you see the family?

PROVIDER

The plan was for us to meet weekly, but as I said, Ms. Taylor often canceled. She'd call to reschedule, but sometimes she just wasn't home when I got there.

REVIEWER

With that in mind then, how often would you say you were able to be in the home with Ms. Taylor and the children?

PROVIDER

Well, it probably came down to being there—that is, actually with the family—about twice a month, sometimes less. As I said, sometimes I would go out to the home and no one was there.

REVIEWER

Next, let's talk about risk and safety assessments. What was your understanding of risk and safety concerns as you worked with the family?

PROVIDER

When I first got the referral, I had a call with Ms. Diaz, the caseworker. She went over the initial risk and safety assessment. I saw where the Department wanted Ms. Taylor to provide better supervision for the girls. I worked with Marsha on parenting issues using the Positive Parenting Curriculum. Sometimes, I felt like Marsha didn't understand that she needed help with parenting or needed to provide more supervision for the girls. When I would tie a particular concept in the curriculum to safety, she'd say, "My girls are safe enough." She also thought that there wasn't a problem with Claire watching Cara for long periods of time.

REVIEWER

Thanks. That's helpful for me to understand. So besides the Positive Parenting Curriculum what other things did you do with Ms. Taylor and the girls?

PROVIDER

For the lack of resources, I provided them with food from the food bank, a crock pot, and other essentials. For the unsafe home I helped Marsha with cleaning up the house. To help her with resources I provided concrete services like transportation to some of Marsha's appointments, and referrals to utility assistance programs. I also visited with Claire's teacher and I helped make their holiday nicer with food and gifts for the girls.

REVIEWER

Did the Department share any information with you about the children's needs, aside from safety needs?

PROVIDER

The caseworker shared with me that Cara had some developmental needs. Ms. Taylor followed thru with the assessment and there were recommendations for speech and physical therapy. I was concerned that mom did not follow thru with therapy in spite of my offers of assistance.

Claire was having some issues in school related to attendance and homework. I did my best to address that by working with the mom on household organization in the hopes that it would give her time to spend with Claire. I also had a couple of calls with the school counselor to discuss Claire's progress and her attendance improved during my intervention. The school counselor told me that Claire had a difficult time fitting in with her peers; I think she used the term "socially isolated" when describing Claire. I remember Claire was really excited at Christmas because she had a new friend that she met at school. It was like she didn't know how to be around other children. I know it took Claire a while to feel comfortable around me. What that little girl seems

to be most comfortable doing was taking care of her little sister and trying to take care of her mom. I think she also missed her daddy. She talked to me about him sometimes. She knew her Mom didn't want him around.

REVIEWER

Did you share these concerns about Claire's needs with the worker and, if so, what was the worker's response?

PROVIDER

No, I didn't get a chance to really share those concerns with the worker because it was always so hard to keep in touch with her. As far as I know the caseworker didn't do anything about Claire's social needs or her desire to see her father.

REVIEWER

Let's talk about Ms. Taylor now. Do you know whether the agency conducted a comprehensive assessment of Ms. Taylor's needs? Did they share any information with you about her background, history, and specific needs?

PROVIDER

I don't know how comprehensive the assessment was—but it really wasn't my job to weigh in on that. My understanding was that I should focus my work on the needs that the Department identified for Mom around home management and parenting. I was concerned that Ms. Taylor's drug use wasn't really assessed. Sometimes I would meet with Ms. Taylor and I wondered if she was using—sometimes all jittery. Other times she could barely focus. She would say that she was just tired. And there was this one time that the neighbor talked with me when I tried to meet with the family. They weren't home and the neighbor saw me standing outside. She said there were still parties happening at night in the home.

I did share this with the caseworker and talked to her about my concerns. But the worker seemed to keep relying on the UAs. It bothered me that the Ms. Diaz didn't consider that a no-show for a UA was like a positive.

REVIEWER

I think that is all the questions that I have. Ms. Romero, thank you for coming in to talk with me about your work with this family and this case. Is there anything else you'd like to share with me—anything you think would be important for me to know?

PROVIDER

It was a pleasure working with Marsha and the girls and I wanted to work with them longer. I was concerned about the family and remember I wanted to provide ongoing service because mom really was slow in making steady progress. I was concerned Ms. Diaz really never called me back and I couldn't always share my concerns. I did send one final report that recommended services continue. And, as we were just talking about, I was concerned that drug use was never adequately assessed. I know that wasn't my job and so I reported it to Ms. Diaz.

REVIEWER

Ok, thank you for that additional information. Thanks again for your time.