



North Carolina Practice Standards Worker Assessment

North Carolina Worker Assessment

The North Carolina Practice Standards builds skills and behaviors in the workforce that provide the groundwork for learning, and they are the foundation of North Carolina's Practice Model. The Practice Standards are anchored by our core values: safety-focused, trauma-informed, family-centered, and cultural humility. They are described in observable, behaviorally specific terms to illustrate how social workers will conduct the essential functions of child welfare and how supervisors and leaders will support them. The Practice Standards are divided into five essential functions: communicating, engaging, assessing, planning, and implementing.

The North Carolina Worker Assessment tool is a companion document to the Practice Standards. This assessment is a useful tool to evaluate ways in which you incorporate the Practice Standards into your own practice and areas to improve upon. Assessments are used as a quality improvement measure and will support your learning to enhance your skills and behaviors. This assessment tool can be used in a variety of ways, such as a self-assessment, peer review, or a 360-degree evaluation. Following the assessment tool is an Action Plan you will complete where you will identify the specific actions you plan to take to implement the behaviors of the Practice Standards into your work paying particular attention to the areas noted as occurring 'sometimes' or 'never.'

Self-Assessment

A self-assessment is your evaluation of your own practice, behaviors, and attitudes, in particular your implementation of the Practice Standards within your work. When completing the assessment tool as a self-assessment, you will complete the tool on your own following the below instructions. Reflective, thoughtful, and honest responses to each item will provide you with the information necessary to improve your practice to the benefit of the children and families you work with.

Peer Review

A peer review is an evaluation of your practice and professional work by others in similar positions who you work with. A peer review provides a structured framework for other workers to assess and provide feedback to you on your work and implementation of the Practice Standards. When completing the assessment tool as a peer review, you will ask other workers to complete the tool as an evaluation of your work following the below instructions. You can use the information gathered through the peer review as you complete your action plan.

360-Degree Evaluation

A 360-degree evaluation is a process where you receive confidential and anonymous feedback on your practice and work from others who work around you, including leaders in your organization, your supervisor, and other workers. It's important that a 360-degree evaluation be completed by a variety of your colleagues in different positions. A 360-degree evaluation is a helpful assessment that will provide you with greater insight and understanding of your practice and behaviors, particularly those that relate to the Practice Standards. When completing the assessment tool as a 360-degree evaluation, you will ask leaders, supervisors, workers, and other staff within your organization to complete the tool as an evaluation of your work following the below instructions. You can use the information gathered through the 360-degree evaluation as you complete your action plan.

Instructions

The North Carolina Worker Assessment tool is divided into several sections; there is one section for each corresponding Practice Standard. Each section may be completed in one sitting or completed over time. The assessment should be completed individually, and keep in mind the assessment will be looking at your practice as a whole.

Each core activity within the Practice Standards is broken down into three stages: optimal, developmental, and insufficient. These stages should be used to anchor the ratings in the assessment. Each stage is a steppingstone to the

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next allowing you to gradually improve your skill set as a child welfare professional. This assessment will help you, as a learner, identify goals and objectives to begin integrating the Practice Standards into your work.

The assessment is completed by determining which number on the rating scale corresponds best to your own practice behaviors. There is also space to take notes where a rationale for the rating can be added. Each behavior will be rated on a three-point scale: (1) always, (2) sometimes, (3) never.

1. Always: I implement this standard consistently in my own child welfare practice
2. Sometimes: I inconsistently implement this standard in my own child welfare practice
3. Never: I never implement this standard in my own child welfare practice

North Carolina Worker Assessment: Communicating

Introduction

Communicating is defined as timely and consistent sharing of spoken and written information so that meaning, and intent are understood in the same way by all parties involved. Open and honest communication underpins successful performance of all essential functions in child welfare.

There are four Communicating core activities: (1) use clear language and checking to assure two-way understanding, (2) using respectful, non-judgmental, and empowering language, (3) operating with transparency, and (4) respecting confidentiality and privacy.

Table 1. Core Activity: Using clear language and checking to assure two-way understanding

Practice Standard 1: Ensure clarity when communicating				
	A	S	N	Notes
I use clear, specific, understandable oral and written communication	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I share important information with families verbally and in writing	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 2: Adapt communication to family needs and preferences, and provide consistent information to all family members who need it				
	A	S	N	Notes
I consider language barriers, preferences, literacy, and tailor communication	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I use preferred gender pronouns	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I attend to the child and family's language and use their words	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ask families for their communication preferences	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I share appropriate information, provide consistent information	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 3: Allow time to enhance two-way communication with families through questions and checks for understanding				
	A	S	N	Notes

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I seek to allow enough time for two-way communication	(1)	(2)	(3)
I inform families of time limits, fully present, schedule follow-up meeting	(1)	(2)	(3)
I actively listen to families, reflect back	(1)	(2)	(3)
I ask questions for deeper understanding	(1)	(2)	(3)
I encourage and respond to questions from families, confirm understanding	(1)	(2)	(3)

Table 2. Using respectful, non-judgmental, and empowering language

Practice Standard 4: Speak with youth and families in a non-judgement, respectful manner				
	A	S	N	Notes
I convey interest and respect through body language	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I use consistently objective, strengths-based language	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I regularly seek out families' feelings, validate them	(1)	(2)	(3)	

Table 3. Operating with transparency and honesty

Practice Standard 5: Clearly and openly express to youth and families what is expected from them and what they can expect from child welfare				
	A	S	N	Notes
I explain the role of child welfare, what to expect, decision points, timeframes	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I fully inform families of options and opportunities, seek options from families	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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I follow through with commitments, explain changing circumstances	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I set timeframes for responses to questions, follow through	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I answer questions honestly	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 6: Always tell the truth, including during difficult conversations, in a manner that promotes dialogue				
	A	S	N	Notes
I acknowledge mistakes and misunderstandings	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I acknowledge when information is not known, cannot be shared	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I consistently model transparency and honesty	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I share important information without threatening or attacking, promotes dialogue	(1)	(2)	(3)	

Table 4. Core Activity: Respecting confidentiality and privacy

Practice Standard 7: Diligently respect confidentiality while sharing information when necessary and appropriate				
	A	S	N	Notes
I clarify and follow legal expectations for confidentiality, explain what can be shared	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I follow-up with my supervisor on what can be shared	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I take the release of information process seriously	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ensure families know their right to revoke release of information	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I anticipate and minimize breaches of confidentiality	(1)	(2)	(3)	

I understand that families perceive confidentiality as isolating, discuss confidentiality, obtain releases

(1) (2) (3)

North Carolina Worker Self-Assessment: Engaging

Introduction

Engaging is defined as empowering and motivating families to actively participate with child welfare by communicating openly and honestly with the family, demonstrating respect, and valuing the family’s input and preferences. Engagement begins upon first meeting a family and continues throughout child welfare services.

There are three Engaging core activities: (1) Focused attention to understand families, (2) demonstrating interest and empathy for families in verbal and non-verbal behavior, and (3) acknowledging family strengths.

Table 1. Core Activity: Focused attention to understand families

Practice Standard 1: Fully present when meeting with families				
	A	S	N	Notes
I attend to families, ignore other distractions	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I explain notetaking, present and paying attention	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I acknowledge the statements of families	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I am aware of cultural norms and family preferences	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I allow families to finish speaking	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I establish rapport	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 2: Prepares in advance to be able to connect with families				
	A	S	N	Notes
I develop clarifying and follow-up questions	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I prepare questions, is flexible based on meeting dynamics	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I prepare for interactions based on individual needs	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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I remember action items for future discussions	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I collaborate with families, brings understanding to all interactions	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I understand, adjust to cultural considerations and preferences	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 3: Considers the family's perspective in all exchanges and actions				
	A	S	N	Notes
I operate with belief that families are experts of their own situation	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I listen and acknowledge families' perspective	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ask questions to understand	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I treat families as essential partners	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I show respect by including families in planning	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I include families in decision making	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I appropriately build relationships with families from other cultural groups	(1)	(2)	(3)	

Table 2. Core Activity: Demonstrating interest and empathy for families in verbal and non-verbal behavior

Practice Standard 4: Recognizes the family's perspectives and desires				
	A	S	N	Notes
I empower families to feel confident and comfortable	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I provide opportunity for families to co-lead conversation	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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I engage with families to check-in after tough situations	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I recognize the power dynamics in uncomfortable situations	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I am open minded	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I engage families in problem solving, encourage ownership	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 5: Use body language to convey interest to families				
	A	S	N	Notes
I maintain eye contact	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I lean in when speaking	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I am mindful of facial expressions and nod my head affirmatively	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I understand culture may play a role in body language	(1)	(2)	(3)	

Table 3. Core Activity: Acknowledging family strengths

Practice Standard 6: Acknowledge and celebrate strengths and successes				
	A	S	N	Notes
I build on small successes and verbally recognize progress	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I am consistently strengths-based and objective	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I identify positives	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I take a holistic approach, focusing on strengths	(1)	(2)	(3)	

I encourage families to identify their strengths

(1) (2) (3)

North Carolina Worker Assessment: Assessing

Introduction

Assessing is defined as gathering and synthesizing information from children, families, support systems, agency records, and persons with knowledge to determine the need for child protective services and to inform planning for safety, permanency, and well-being. Assessing occurs throughout child welfare services and includes learning from families about their strengths and preferences.

There are four Assessing core activities: (1) gathering information from children, caretakers, and other family members, (2) gathering and reviewing history, including agency records and other service assessments, (3) gathering information from collateral sources including service providers and persons with relevant knowledge, and (4) using critical thinking to synthesize information, assess what additional information is needed, and inform decision making.

Table 1. Core Activity: Gathering information from children, caretakers, and other family members

Practice Standard 1: Differentiates between information and positions				
	A	S	N	Notes
I moderate information gathering sessions	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I gather information that supports all positions	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I understand my own biases that may cloud positions	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 2: Takes time to get to know families and explain the assessment process				
	A	S	N	Notes
I take time to conversationally gather the family's story	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I use engagement to build family participation in assessment process	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I get a picture of the family's hopes, aspirations, challenges, and worries	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I explain the assessment process, reiterating purpose	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I authentically share with the family about the process	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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I keep in mind the culture of the family when gathering information	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 3: Asks questions based on information needed and at ease asking uncomfortable questions				
	A	S	N	Notes
I ask open-ended, strengths-based questions	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I understand what type of questions elicit the best type of answers	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I have the ability to hear difficult information without reaction	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I engage in crucial conversations	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I utilize a narrative approach to gather perspectives on historical information	(1)	(2)	(3)	

Table 2. Core Activity: Gathering and reviewing history, including agency records and other service assessments

Practice Standard 4: Stays open to different explanations of events in the record, keeping biases in check				
	A	S	N	Notes
I continuously gather information	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I am diligent in pursuing information	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I understand how to factor historical information into current situation	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I keep an open mind	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 5: Balances what is read in the record and what families share				
	A	S	N	Notes
I review information ahead of meeting the family, but ask them to share their perspective	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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I identify in the record what has historically worked well for the family	(1)	(2)	(3)
I have an understanding of what biases I hold when reviewing history	(1)	(2)	(3)

Table 3. Core Activity: Gathering information from collateral sources including service providers and persons with relevant knowledge

Practice Standard 6: Obtains all sides if there are differing positions among collaterals, engaging families in the process				
	A	S	N	Notes
I seek out wide number of collaterals and balance collateral sources	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I obtain information from as many collaterals as time permits	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I consider all relevant collateral sources	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I am honest with families when I must reach out to collaterals the family is unhappy with and explain why	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I let the family help identify collaterals and ask their permission before contacting	(1)	(2)	(3)	

Table 4. Core Activity: Using critical thinking to synthesize information, assess what additional information is needed, and inform decision making

Practice Standard 7: Synthesizes information and considers sources, prioritization, and timelines				
	A	S	N	Notes
I continually gather information	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I understand assessment is ongoing process in determining needs	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I rank information received based on relevance and priority	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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I prioritize information that negatively impacts children to address first	(1)	(2)	(3)
Practice Standard 8: Remains non-judgmental when processing information			
	A	S	N Notes
I am inquisitive from the beginning of assessment process	(1)	(2)	(3)
I understand the family's community as they define it	(1)	(2)	(3)
I operate with cultural humility	(1)	(2)	(3)
I persevere in gathering information, follow the information	(1)	(2)	(3)
I understand not all information is relevant	(1)	(2)	(3)
I normalize reactions family has to information and assessment results	(1)	(2)	(3)
I understand fight, flight, or freeze response	(1)	(2)	(3)

North Carolina Worker Assessment: Planning

Introduction

Planning is defined as respectfully and meaningfully collaborating with families, communities, tribes, and other identified team members to set goals and develop strategies based on the continuous assessment of safety, risk, family strengths, and needs through a child and family team process. Plans should be revisited regularly by the team to determine progress towards meeting goals and make changes when needed.

There are Four Planning core activities: (1) synthesizing and integrating current and previous assessment information and family history to inform plans, (2) preparing families for the teaming/planning process, (3) conducting child and family team meetings with children, youth, and families, and (4) completing and revising behaviorally based case plans.

Table 1. Core Activity: Synthesizing and integrating current and previous assessment information and family history to inform plans

Practice Standard 1: Engages family in understanding assessment and history, focusing on strengths to customize plans				
	A	S	N	Notes
I transparently share assessments with families	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I see family input into what has and hasn't worked in the past, apply information	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I partner with families owning their plan, creating buy-in	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 2: Discovers root causes and underlying reasons for family involvement				
	A	S	N	Notes
I seek input from others with knowledge of family history, keep an open mind	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I focus plan on identified needs, tied to assessment	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ask questions and seek information to help families understand root cause	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I discuss DSS concerns with family, get feedback	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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Table 2. Core Activity: Preparing families for the teaming/planning process

Practice Standard 3: Believes and practices the importance of preparation, both for self and for the family, for teaming and planning				
	A	S	N	Notes
I come to meeting prepared based on review of information	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I prepare families for meetings ahead of time, providing copies of documents	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I consider adjustments to better accommodate families	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ensure families understand CFTs are their meetings, explains rights	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ask families who they would like to invite to meetings	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ask families what they want to accomplish during meetings	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 4: Actively engages family in identifying their team				
	A	S	N	Notes
I explain to families the purpose of teams, role they play	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I explore ways to involve children in CFT	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I work with families to identify supports, encourage families to invite to meetings	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I explain why having support is important	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I creatively explore and troubleshoot with families past supports	(1)	(2)	(3)	

Table 3. Core Activity: Conducting child and family team meetings with children, youth, and families

Practice Standard 5: Promotes family voice as the cornerstone of the meeting				
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	A	S	N	Notes
I encourage families to start meetings sharing strengths or concerns	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I encourage children and youth to participate	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I reinforce strengths of families through meeting, share protective capacity examples	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I provide families options about aspects of meetings to engage families	(1)	(2)	(3)	

Practice Standard 6: Facilitates and engages participants throughout, acknowledging and managing conflict

	A	S	N	Notes
I set and reinforce boundaries and expectations throughout meetings	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I make sure all voices are heard and expressed during meetings	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I show empathy and acknowledge how distressing situation may be, provide support	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I am clear on concerns, ask families to identify solutions	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I diffuse situations when conversations escalate	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I manage emotions in the room well	(1)	(2)	(3)	

Table 4. Core Activity: Completing and revising behaviorally based case plans.

Practice Standard 7: Actively involves families in developing behavioral based case plans

	A	S	N	Notes
I co-create plans that are flexible and individualized	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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I invite families to identify issues they want to change, include in plan	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I utilize harm and danger statements to identify safety issues	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I plan with families not for or about families	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I structure plan around behaviors desired to change, not completion of programs	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I prioritize tasks in plans and break down tasks into manageable steps	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 8: Revisits the case plan regularly, willing to modify or update as needed, but at a minimum per policy				
	A	S	N	Notes
I bring subject of case plan into every conversation	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ensure families have a copy of their case plan	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I update plans with every success to show progress, keep families motivated	(1)	(2)	(3)	

North Carolina Worker Assessment: Implementing

Introduction

Implementing is defined as carrying out plans that have been developed. Implementing includes linking families to services and community supports, supporting families to take actions agreed upon in plans and monitoring to assure plans are being implemented by both families and providers, monitoring progress on behavioral goals, and identifying when plans need to be adapted.

There are three Implementing core activities: (1) supporting families to take actions agreed upon in the plan and connecting families to services and community support, (2) collaborating with providers and informal supports in the community to help families achieve desired outcomes, and (3) coaching with families and partnering with providers to assure plans are being implemented, progress is made, and outcomes achieved.

Table 1. Core Activity: Supporting families to take actions agreed upon in the plan and connecting families to services and community support

Practice Standard 1: Supports families to take actions				
	A	S	N	Notes
I prioritize the family's availability and convenience when providing support	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I offer to call or link families to providers as a first step	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I show families through actions and words that I am interested in their success	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 2: Works with families to find solutions to challenges				
	A	S	N	Notes
I ask questions tailored to individual family needs to identify challenges to engaging in services	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ask families what their concerns about services and service delivery	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I advocate for families and help them navigate the system	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ensure families are participating in the amount of services they can handle	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I support families in their service prioritization	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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Practice Standard 3: Explains to families what services are and what they could do for the family to provide information and informed decisions				
	A	S	N	Notes
I engage families in conversation about purpose of recommended service	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I check-in for families' understanding of services purpose on ongoing basis	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I provide families with contact information for service providers	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I make suggestions on the frequency families should follow-up with providers	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ensure recommended services are behaviorally specific, not duplicative	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I seek to understand and empathize families' concerns related to services	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 4: Offers an array of service providers to choose from if there are choices to be had				
	A	S	N	Notes
I identify resources available and provide information to families	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I offer to think with the families as they decide on service providers	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I point out service providers based on knowledge of families' history	(1)	(2)	(3)	

Table 2. Core Activity: Collaborating with providers and informal supports in the community to help families achieve desired outcomes

Practice Standard 5: Advocates with and for families with providers on what behavioral change is expected to ensure quality service delivery				
	A	S	N	Notes
I communicate with providers and families about agreed upon behavioral changes being sought	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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I share with providers relevant assessment and case plan information	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I provide feedback to providers, ask questions about services	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I regularly check-in, monitor service delivery	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I escalate problems to my supervisor	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I understand what treatment being provided, what is expected, and evidence of results	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ensure services delivered are tailored to meet families' needs	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 6: Accesses natural supports in the community to assist families to achieve their goals				
	A	S	N	Notes
I engage families to identify community supports	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I educate families regarding how to access community resources	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I encourage families to reach out to other systems	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I facilitate meetings between families and support systems	(1)	(2)	(3)	

Table 3. Core Activity: Coaching with families and partnering with providers to assure plans are being implemented, progress is made, and outcomes achieved

Practice Standard 7: Checks-in on an ongoing basis with families on progress with the Family Service Agreement				
	A	S	N	Notes
I routinely ask families if services are good match	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I provide families feedback if they are or are not making efforts	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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I follow-up with families when appointments missed to identify challenges	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I problem solve with families to find solutions to challenges	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I reassess barriers once services begun	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 8: Assesses progress in implementing actions of plan, making adjustments as needed				
	A	S	N	Notes
I work with families to identify when changes needed in service delivery	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I troubleshoot when goals not achieved to determine root cause	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I engage collaterals about progress made and additional service needs	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I make changes in actions in plan when necessary, not when convenient	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I celebrate wins when goals achieved	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 9: Tracks service delivery for achievement of safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for the family				
	A	S	N	Notes
I routinely check-in with service providers on progress	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I assess successful completion of service in connection with desired behavior change	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I consider the long-term outcomes when determining achievement of outcomes	(1)	(2)	(3)	

North Carolina Worker Action Plan

Action Planning

This Action Plan will help you identify the specific actions you plan to take to implement the behaviors of the Practice Standards into your work. While you complete the Action Plan, pay particular attention to the behaviors noted as happening 'sometimes' or 'never' and identify specific actions to address these areas.

	Practice Standard Behavior	As a result of what I learned through this assessment, I am going to...	I will know I am succeeding with this objective when...
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			