



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

ROY COOPER • Governor

KODY H. KINSLEY • Secretary

SUSAN G. OSBORNE • Assistant Secretary for Human Services

May 17, 2023

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**ATTENTION: DIRECTORS, CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS, MANAGERS,
SUPERVISORS, AND SOCIAL WORKERS**

SUBJECT: UPDATES TO THE INTAKE AND ASSESSMENT POLICY MANUAL

REQUIRED ACTION: Information Only Time Sensitive-*Effective July 1, 2023* Immediate

NC DSS is committed to ensuring that counties are provided with the best protocol and guidance to support compliance with the law and best practice of child welfare services. As a result of several common technical assistance concerns, NC DSS made revisions to the Intake and Assessment manuals with the goal of alignment with statute, improved practice, and increased consistency across child welfare statewide. Changes will provide clarification and direction in protocol and guidance to improve decision making and increase safety of children. The most critical change is the removal of Services Recommended as a case decision option. Review of fatality data and other cases reviews indicate that this case decision is being used incorrectly for cases that should receive In-Home Services with negative impacts on safety. Adjustments have been made to the other case decisions as well. Additional information about this change and impact on current cases open in Assessments or cases with pending 5104s can be found below. The changes will be effective beginning July 1, 2023.

The revised manual changes include:

- **CPS Intake**
 - Improper discipline has been changed to Unsafe discipline.
 - Removal of “criminal charge” requirement to the DUI section and chart. The option to screen cases where caretakers drive under the influence as a neglect case has also been removed. They must be screened as abuse.
 - Protocol under unsafe discipline that states a mark or bruise cannot be screened in unless it has lasted longer than 24 hours has been removed. The timeframe is no longer necessary to screen in a report of unsafe discipline when a mark or bruise is present.
- **CPS Family and Investigative Assessments:**
 - Removal of Services Recommended as a case decision.
 - Change Case Decision title from, “Services Needed” to “Child Protective Services Needed.”
 - Change Case Decision title from, “Services Not Recommended” to “Child Protective Services Not Needed.”
 - Change Case Decision title from “Services Provided, Services No Longer Needed.” to “Services”

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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Provided, Child Protective Services No Longer Needed.”

- Addition of the requirement of a case decision for cases with a fatality and only one child.
- Addition of the requirement of a case decision for cases with a child who turns 18 and there is only one child.
- Protocol and guidance for cases with an unknown perpetrator.

The revised protocol and guidance will provide workers with what must be done and how it should be done. NC DSS recognizes the shift in practice that is required for the changes listed above, particularly the removal of “Services Recommended”, and the adjustments made to the other three case decisions. This change was made to assist workers in making case decisions that better reflect the needs of the families that we serve in child welfare.

Next Steps

The revised changes will be presented to the county child welfare agencies at the Children’s Services Committee on June 7, 2023.

A live webinar “**Case Decision Changes and Removal of Services Recommended**” will be provided on **June 14, 2023, from 10-11:30a** to provide further instruction on the case decision changes and implementation. The webinar will be recorded and uploaded to ncswlearn.org to view for those unable to attend.

The webinar link to register is: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8903029755027535450>

Office Hours for Safety Changes will be provided to discuss all safety changes and answer questions on **Tuesday, July 25, 2023, from 1-2p** and **Wednesday, July 26, 2023 from 11-12p**. Additional Information will go out later.

All pending 5104s and Case Decisions not entered before July 1, 2023, will receive an error message if the case decision is “Services Recommended.” The CWS and Legacy system will no longer include “Services Recommended” as an option. The Regional Child Welfare Consultants will review all pending assessment cases with CWS counties prior to July 1, 2023. Legacy counties will need to ensure they have reviewed their pending assessments and 5104s prior to July 1, 2023 to avoid keying error messages.

A Child Welfare Policy Manual Revisions document (aka Crosswalk) is attached that provides a preview of the new policy. The revised Assessment Documentation Instrument, DSS-5010 will also be posted on the Division’s Web-page at <https://policies.ncdhhs.gov/divisional/social-services/forms> on July 1, 2023.

This policy will be effective and published on July 1, 2023 on the Division’s web page that can be found at <https://policies.ncdhhs.gov/divisional/social-services/child-welfare/policy-manuals> for your review. A draft of this policy is attached.

If you have any questions, please contact Amanda Hubbard at Amanda.Hubbard@dhhs.nc.gov, DSS HS Program Consultant, or your Regional Child Welfare Consultant.

Sincerely,

Kathy P. Stone

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Section Chief for Safety and Prevention

North Carolina Division of Social Services

Cc: Susan Osborne, Assistant Secretary for Human Services
Lisa Tucker Cauley, Senior Director for Child, Family and Adult Services
Adrian Daye, Deputy Director for Child Welfare Practice
Tammy Shook, Interim Deputy Director for County Operations
Carla McNeil, Section Chief for Prevention and Safety
Peter West, Section Chief for County Operations
Kimaree Sanders, Section Chief for Licensing and Regulatory

Attachments:

Child Welfare Policy Manual Revisions
(Crosswalk) Draft Child Welfare Intake Policy
Draft Child Welfare Assessment Policy

CWS-29-2023