



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Social Services

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Courier # 56-20-25

Michael F. Easley, Governor
Carmen Hooker Buell, Secretary

Pheon E. Beal, Director
(919) 733-3055

August 9, 2001

Dear County Director of Social Services

**Attention: Child Welfare Supervisors
Child Welfare Social Workers**

Subject: Suspension of Biennial Reviews and Anticipated Changes

As you know, the federal government conducted the Child and Family Services Review in North Carolina in March of this year. The results of that review were that North Carolina was found to be out of substantial compliance in each of the outcome areas that were measured. The Division is in the process of developing a Program Improvement Plan to be submitted to the federal agency next week.

Because of our program improvement status and the potential for financial sanctions if we are not successful in bringing the state (including all 100 counties) into substantial compliance within two years, the Division is looking seriously at our policy, consultation, training and reviews of county performance. In anticipation of the need to make some significant changes to the biennial review process, we suspended the reviews on July 16th and requested a special meeting of the Children's Services Advisory Committee. Over 20 county DSS agencies are represented on this Committee that has worked closely with the Division in the design of the biennial review process since its inception.

This week we had an initial meeting with the Children's Services Advisory Committee about the possibility of incorporating the federal Child and Family Services Review protocol and review instrument into our biennial review process. In this manner, our review process would measure the same outcomes that the federal agency is measuring, and we would hold ourselves accountable for the same level of system performance that the federal government is holding the state accountable. The Committee has agreed that we should demonstrate this concept in two volunteer county DSS agencies that were already scheduled for a biennial review between mid-July and mid-September. Following the demonstration reviews, the Committee will meet again to de-brief the experience and make any final changes to the protocol and instrument. These materials will be distributed to all county DSS agencies as soon as they are finalized.

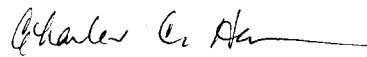
We have contacted county DSS agencies that were originally scheduled for a biennial review after July 16th and will be rescheduling their reviews for sometime after October 1st. Following the demonstration reviews, we will "pick up where we left off" with the original biennial review scheduling order of county DSS agencies, giving adequate notice to each.

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The Advisory Committee has recommended several measures to address concerns about changes to the biennial review process. The reports from the demonstration reviews will not include county-specific scores and will be written in the context of what the county agency can do to enable the state to come into substantial compliance in the outcome areas. We anticipate that the revised review protocol will continue the self-assessment process, county staff participation, and county agency review of the report draft that the biennial review process included.

We hope that you share our determination to do everything possible to come into substantial compliance and avoid financial sanctions. If you have any questions about changes to the biennial review process, please call Sara Anderson Mims at (919) 733-9461, or e-mail her at sara.mims@ncmail.net.

Sincerely,



Charles C. Harris, Chief
Children's Services Section

CS-29-2001

cc: Pheon Beal
Paul LeSieur
Local Support Managers
Children's Services Team Leaders
Children's Services Programs Representatives