



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

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Michael F. Easley, Governor
Carmen Hooker Buell, Secretary

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

October 19, 2001

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

ATTENTION: CHILD WELFARE SUPERVISORS

Subject: Child and Family Services Review Protocol and Instruments

As a result of the federal Child and Family Services Review in North Carolina in March of this year and the subsequent Program Improvement plan for the state, the Division recognized a need to make some significant changes to the biennial review process. The Division suspended biennial reviews effective 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.

Division staff and the Children's Services Advisory Committee have completed the revisions to the Biennial Review Protocol and review instruments. The revised protocol, review instrument, and associated documents are attached. Please review these documents carefully, as they constitute significant changes to the current process. Please share the attached information with your entire Children's Services staff.

The new process continues to be outcomes-focused and measures the same outcomes that the federal agency is measuring. The design of the process and the review instrument closely mirrors that of the federal review process and instrument. We will be using this new review process, now called the Child and Family Services Review, and will be holding ourselves accountable for the same level of performance that the federal government is holding the state accountable. At the recommendation of the committee, the new process was demonstrated in two counties (Lenoir County and Washington County) in September. Following the demonstration reviews, the Committee met again to finalize the protocol and review instrument. Final approval was given by the Children's Services Committee of the NC Association of County Directors of Social Services on October 10, 2001.

All of the county DSS agencies that had been originally scheduled for a biennial review after July 16th have been rescheduled through the middle of February 2002. The

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Division is now working with each of those counties to prepare for their reviews. Beginning November 1, 2001, the Division will begin sending notification letters to counties being scheduled for reviews according to the new protocol.

The new review process provides for an increased partnership between the state and county in evaluating the county's performance. The county DSS will continue to provide a self-evaluation that will be included in the final report as we have previously done. The county DSS will continue to have editorial input into the final biennial review report. A major change is that interviews will be conducted with persons significant to the case in addition to the review of the case record. Community stakeholders will be asked to complete a survey regarding services to children and families in the county. The public reports will not include county-specific scores. Each outcome area will be identified as being substantially achieved, partially achieved or not achieved. Program Improvement Plans will be required for any outcome area that is not found to be substantially achieved.

The Children's Services Section will notify each county Director three months prior to their scheduled review. We will review all 100 county DSS agencies over the next two years.

We believe that this revised process will significantly contribute to each county's ability to document substantial compliance with the federally-approved outcome areas and ultimately to the state's ability to achieve substantial compliance and avoid financial sanctions. Please note that the attachments will not be included with the hard copy of this letter. You will be able to access the attachments with this letter on the DSS Web Site at <http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/dcdl/section/childrenservices.htm> or the Children's Services website. If you have any questions regarding the revised biennial review process, please contact Sara Anderson Mims at (919) 733-9461.

Sincerely,



Charles C. Harris, Chief
Children's Services Section

Attachments

cc: Pheon Beal
Sherry Bradsher
Paul Lesieur
Children's Programs Representatives
Children's Services Team Leaders

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