



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

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March 1, 2013

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

ATTENTION: County Directors, Administrators and Supervisors

SUBJECT: Child Welfare Data Collection

The Division of Social Services in partnership with North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services (NCACDSS) has made significant changes in the child welfare data collection process (formerly known as the Annual Child Welfare Staffing Survey). This letter will provide an overview of the changes and the data collection system developed. Prior to participating in one of the webinars please review the following information.

Background

The Child Welfare Staffing Survey was created to depict county departments of social services compliance with child welfare work force caseload standards. Periodically, the survey was adjusted to changing needs and to monitor workloads and practice progress. Accurate and consistent data continues to be critical when describing a county's workforce capacity to achieve safety, permanency, and well-being for children. Survey results are used in program planning and management at the state and local levels. Results also inform public record requests from the General Assembly, the media, advocacy groups, community partners, and other interested parties. The data gathered during this process is used for federal reports submitted by North Carolina in addition to local county department of social services use for budget preparation and position justifications. The importance of accurate and consistent data was highlighted when a report in 2012 appeared to show county agencies having excess staff when in actuality, they were short staffed.

The Children's Services Committee of NCACDSS formed a work group to review the purpose of the survey to ascertain that the information gathered was essential, accurately reflected reality, and was useful for planning. Through this workgroup each data point was examined to ensure that: the data point was essential; the instructions were clear; all necessary data for federal data submissions was gathered; and that the data would provide an accurate platform from which reports could be generated.

Collection Process

A new strategy for data gathering was developed by the workgroup. The strategy divides the data collection into an annual survey and a monthly information gathering format. This is then reported to the Division quarterly. The monthly data report will provide information on the volume of cases to the

Child Welfare Services

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available full time equivalents (FTE), or budgeted positions that are assigned to cover the volume of cases.

The annual survey is the first part of the data collection process. It has been shortened to gather information relevant to annual requirements. Such as: information about legal representation; agency's after hours' response system; staff turnover; full time equivalents assigned to child protective services intake and child protective services assessments; and staff education levels. These data are used for federal reporting, technical assistance, and public information purposes. Yearly agencies will be notified and provided a work sheet to record information for local purposes. However, the Division will not have the capacity to provide counties with their individual reports once the information has been submitted on line.

The second part of the data collection addresses monthly workload and county staffs' ability to cover those workloads. Information regarding caseloads and FTE's will be kept by county staff as part of a monthly report that is submitted to the Division quarterly. The elements of workload data collection has been simplified by only asking for last day of the month caseload information, and only from the major program modeled after a county report already in use. The format for this report is an electronic Excel Workbook and includes a page for each month and a master page that compiles the data to be submitted to the Division quarterly. The workbook includes the calculations in protected cells to prevent accidental deletion of the information; changing these calculations will compromise the integrity and validity of the data collection process.

Please note: notes are included in cells with a red triangle in the corner to assist in completion. If you hold the cursor on the cell, an explanatory note will pop up to help explain what information is being requested.

Implementation

The information for the annual survey needs to be gathered on the attached worksheet and entered on line by March 15, 2013. The highlighted boxes on the worksheet are where responses will be recorded when the on-line survey is completed. Complete the worksheet first as once it is completed on-line you will not be able to return to partially completed surveys. Please retain the worksheet for your records. The survey link is: <http://www.ncsurveymax.com/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=781L764>

For the second part of the data collection regarding monthly workload, begin recording the information on the workbook page beginning January, 2013. The first data submission for January through March will be April 15, 2013. Specific instructions for this submission will be sent to you at that time. Please ensure that your Director is aware of your responses.

Technical Assistance

Three technical assistance conference calls are scheduled for March 5, 2013 at 10 a.m., March 8 at 10:30 a.m., and March 11 at 2:00 pm. The call in phone number is 218-339-2699 and the pass code is 994881. The link is <https://dss.ncgovconnect.com/r88354732>. This webinar is open to all participants, please share with interested parties. If you have questions, please contact one of the Children's Program Representatives or Jeff Olson at (919) 334-1137 or jeffrey.olson@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,



Kevin Kelley, Section Chief
Child Welfare Services

cc: Jack Rogers
Child Welfare Team Leaders
Children's Programs Representatives
Local Business Liaisons