



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

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DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Attention: DIRECTORS AND CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS

SUBJECT: QUALITATIVE CASE REVIEWS (QCR) FOCUS GROUP FEEDBACK

The Division would like to take this opportunity to share the results of the Qualitative Case Reviews (QCR) focus groups that were held in October and November 2012. The purpose of these focus groups was to learn how counties are structuring and conducting internal case reviews and to solicit feedback on the redesign of North Carolina's Quality Case Review (QCR) process. Presented here is a summarization of the focus groups. **Please do not interpret this as to imply that all of these points will be incorporated into future qualitative case reviews. The Division continues to receive technical assistance from the Administration on Children Youth and Families (ACYF) on this topic.**

Fifty three counties participated in 9 focus groups and several themes emerged around the discussion of on-going county internal case reviews; the use of a formal QA process, use of the current CFSR instrument, county-to-county collaboration, use of case review results, and the use of data. Recommendations for the state led QCR process also yielded some good suggestions.

Of those counties that participated, a small percentage reported that they conduct a formal case review process;

- Utilizing dedicated staff who, facilitate internal reviews and conduct training on the review process.
- The case review process is conducted at least monthly.

It was reported that a few counties are currently using the current CFSR instrument; others reported using one or more of the following:

- a condensed version
- a checklist
- focus/family group interviews.

It is encouraging to hear that county-to-county collaboration is occurring with mostly positive feedback; however, it is important to also recognize that interpretive differences do occur.

Child Welfare Services

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For those counties who continue to conduct case reviews, the use of case review results, is mixed. Internally results are used to;

- drive internal training
- evaluate individual worker performance and coaching
- inform Director/Program Manager/Supervisor
- target resources

A few of the counties that attended the focus groups reported that a formal presentation of review data was organized for any level of the agency; internal or external.

The resources for county level data were identified as:

- Data Warehouse – although it is widely reported to be used to generate reports, Data Warehouse is described as not user-friendly.
- UNC Management Assistance Website – overall, this website is not being used.
- State generated XPTR reports are popular
- Internal data bases are widely used to determine benchmarks but that getting workers to connect data to practice is challenging.

The external sharing of county level data, when it occurs, is usually shared with DSS Boards and Community Child Protection Teams (CCPT). It is important to note that a number of Reaching for Excellence and Accountability in Practice (REAP) counties also participated in the focus groups and shared that the dissemination of county level data occurs on a community level more often than non-REAP counties.

County feedback on recommendations for the state led Quality Case Reviews was robust and delivered useful information. In addition to suggestions for revisions to the process, strengths and weakness to the process were also discussed.

Overall strengths identified in the previous CFSR process are:

- The teaming of a state and county reviewer
- Interviews with those relevant to the case
- Training on the CFSR instrument
- CFSR instrument does measure quality, unlike checklists.

Weaknesses to the previous CFSR process were identified as:

- Expectations for the small sample size is unrealistic, more weight should be placed on information obtained from interviews.
- Language: “not in substantial conformity”; 95% is too high for achievement
- CFSR instrument is hard to interpret and is time-consuming and there is a lack of inter-rater consistency; specifically noted, is the use of non-CFSR review team state members.
- The scope of training for county members is not sufficient
- The CFSR process overall is described as stressful, disruptive and discouraging, but that the ability to dialogue and negotiate with state partners during QA seemed to mitigate this perception.

Suggestions to consider when discussing improvements to the QCR process include:

- Allow flexibility with the sample for example,
 - The county should be able to pull additional cases if one case was a problem to offset the bad one – this could show it was just a “worker” issue
 - Let the county pull 5 or so of what they think are “good cases.”
 - Another group expanded on this and said those cases could be used for training on the tool prior to a more expanded formalized review a year or so later.

- Don't review cases for areas already reported through data such as timely initiations.
- Debriefing should mirror Child and Family Team's (CFT). This would include community stakeholders in the Exit debriefing, or as a 3rd person on a review team to allow stakeholder input.
- More participation by Children Program Representative (CPR) throughout the review process
- Greater partnership/oversight on the creation of a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) or the development of a CQI plan.

The general consensus is that there is little support for the use of community partners to review cases or for county-to-county peer reviews. Some of the reasons cited for this include:

- Confidentiality
- Training
- Opens the agency to the partner's agenda.

We are grateful for the feedback provided and will take this feedback into consideration as the QCR process is defined. During the process we will continue to seek the county's input in the development, testing and evaluating the process for intended results that is quality outcome based child welfare services. Updates will be provided on quality case reviews so that we can continuously improve our services. Should you have questions, please contact Daphne Green at 919-334-1163.

Sincerely,



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Child Welfare Services

Cc: Sherry S. Bradsher
Jack Rogers
Child Welfare Services Team Leaders

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