



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**

**ROY COOPER** • Governor

**MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH** • Secretary

**SUSAN OSBORNE** • Assistant Secretary for County Operations for  
Human Services

February 5, 2021

**DEAR COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

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

**SUBJECT: Validation of Risk Assessment tools and Statewide Electronic Child Welfare System**

**REQUIRED ACTION:  Information Only  Time Sensitive  Immediate**

**PURPOSE: Recruit line staff to workgroups**

North Carolina's Child Welfare Practice Model includes the validation of the Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools as a component of Safety Organized Practice (SOP). We are excited that Evident Change (formerly NCCD) has started this work, focusing initially on intake, and safety and risk assessments, since SDM tools are an important part of SOP and critical to the use of other SOP tools.

Another major goal of our work is to develop a statewide electronic Child Welfare System that is consistent with our model of practice and promotes positive outcomes for children, youth and families. We are working to make timely, accurate information available, efficient, and intuitive for child welfare workers to use and to inform county and state decision-making.

To that end, we are pleased to have HHS Advisory, under the leadership of Frank Petrus, engaged in the development of a Child Welfare System "Blueprint". This development process will be driven by our Child Welfare programs and model of practice, along with information needed to anticipate, support and validate decisions throughout the life of a case.

To ensure that this work is successful, we need the participation and input of additional frontline County DSS Child Welfare staff. Please consider whether you have staff who can serve as "Subject Matter Experts" (SMEs) and who would be interested in and available for one of the following assignments:

**(1) Assignment: Validation of the Risk Assessment Tools**

The Child Welfare Transformation/Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) Design Teams will be the primary stakeholder groups providing input needed for successful SDM and SOP implementation. The Design Teams meet monthly and provide valuable input towards NC's CFSP Strategic Priorities and the development of the practice standards.

Additionally, we need frontline users of SDMs and SOP involved, to ensure robust county Child Welfare input on the usability and reliability of the tools in North Carolina. We need Child Welfare

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workers and supervisors from intake, CPS assessment, in-home services, and foster care. Having a cross section of frontline staff—not just our most experienced staff—will be helpful since workers with all levels of experience will be using SDM tools and SOP. We especially need workers who are interested in this work and who are willing to give feedback to help towards implementing tools that will be part of NC’s statewide practice model.

**Commitment: We are asking selected County Child Welfare Workers to**

- a. Attend an initial 3-hour virtual SDM/SOP project “kick-off” meeting scheduled for **Friday, February 26, from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm;**
- b. Join a subcommittee of one (1) of the five (5) Design Teams, to provide input into SDM re-validation, and SDM and SOP implementation (workers will participate in a monthly, 1 ½ hour meeting and review materials ahead of time. The dates for the SDM/SOP subcommittee meetings have not yet been determined, but this commitment will begin in March 2020); and,
- c. Consider participating in work sessions occurring between Design Team subcommittee meetings. While optional, we hope that some frontline staff will participate in these sessions.

**(2) Assignment: Child Welfare System: Life of the Case (LoC) Intake and Assessment Review**

The “Life of the Case” (LoC) process will walk “Subject Matter Experts” (SMEs) through a child welfare case. The first phase of the exercise will focus on Intake and Assessment. HHS Advisory will use the LoC methodology to walk SMEs through a case example (scenario), including key steps in the intake and assessment process. Additionally, to help support the SMEs apply our model of practice and fulfill intake and CPS assessment/investigation expectations, a demonstration of the current NC FAST capabilities for providing decision support in gathering and organizing information, will be included. The SMEs will help identify the strengths, challenges, gaps and needs for our future-state Child Welfare Information System. The SMEs will also review and analyze the findings and make recommendations from the exercise.

**Commitment: We are asking selected Intake and Assessment SMEs to**

- a. Attend an initial 2-hour orientation of the LoC methodology, the draft scenario(s), and workflow for Intake and Assessment;
- b. Participate in two (2), half-day (3 hours each) working sessions to walk through the scenario(s) and workflow aligned to existing NCFAST capabilities (in this process, SMEs will provide their input on the current capabilities of NCFAST and identify priorities for improving the Child Welfare System’s capabilities. If possible, the two (2), half-day sessions will be on one day, with an hour break between the two sessions); and,
- c. Provide input and recommendations during the sessions (the input and recommendations will be documented. The draft findings, analysis and recommendations will be provided to and reviewed further with the SMEs via a 2-hour, post-event working session. Afterwards, the findings, analysis and recommendations will be used to support the “Blueprint” for the future statewide Child Welfare Information System).

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Please submit your nominations by **close of business February 15, 2021** to Somer Bailey at [Somer.Bailey@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Somer.Bailey@dhhs.nc.gov), indicating to which of the assignments - (1) Validation of the Risk Assessment Tools, or (2) Life of the Case Intake and Assessment Review - you are nominating staff.

We hope that you and your staff will be excited to help lead the revalidation of SDMs and to shape the implementation of SOP in North Carolina. Thank you for your consideration and partnership.

Sincerely,



Lisa T. Cauley  
Senior Director of Child, Family and Adult Services

Cc: Susan Osborne, Assistant Secretary for County Operations  
Rob Morrell, Director Human Services Business Information & Analytics  
Kathy Stone, Child Protective Services and Prevention Section Chief  
Teresa Strom, County Operations Section Chief  
Carla McNeill, Permanency Planning Section Chief  
Linda Waite, Interim Regulatory and Licensing Section Chief

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