



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

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Secretary

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Director

September 15, 2015

**DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

**ATTENTION: CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS**

**SUBJECT: OVERVIEW OF CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM MONITORING**

The purpose of this letter is to introduce the Division of Social Services' (Division) Child Welfare Program Monitoring, also referred to as process reviews, and provide a description of the objectives of the effort, what will be evaluated, how it will be evaluated, some of the tools being used in the process.

North Carolina General Statute 108A-74 requires the Department of Health and Human Services, through the Division of Social Services, to "ensure the delivery of child welfare services in accordance with State laws and applicable rules." The General Assembly in 2014 allocated nine positions to the Division of Social Services "to enhance oversight of child welfare services in county departments of social services. These positions shall be used to monitor, train, and provide technical assistance to the county departments of social services to ensure children and families are provided services that address the safety, permanency, and well-being of children served by child welfare services." In the spring of 2015, the 9 positions were filled. Protocols and tools for conducting the process reviews of child welfare programs in county child welfare agencies were refined to support the Division's efforts toward implementing a continuous quality improvement system in North Carolina.

#### **Initial Selection of County Partners**

Eight process reviews were conducted to test and evaluate the protocols and tools in June and July 2015. These counties were selected because they either volunteered for the review, they had an unusually high CPS Assessment backlog, were showing notable shifts in the data on case activity that was being reported, or were in the midst of a leadership change in the agency. An additional 30 counties are being contacted to schedule process reviews by the end of this calendar year using the same basic criteria, but also taking into consideration the size of the program. The Division is developing a schedule beginning in January, 2016 to review the remaining counties.

#### **The Scope of the Process Reviews**

The process review entails a review of county agency protocols and practices, including a review of case records and data sources. Process reviews complement the onsite case review component of the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). While the CFSR evaluates outcomes, the process reviews will be used to evaluate practices and processes of county child welfare agencies to comply with statute, rule, and policy that lead to those outcomes. The process review provides an additional insight into

Child Welfare Services

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agency activities and practices. The assumption is if all the activities prescribed by statute, rule and policy are executed, the result will be improved outcomes for children and families.

### **Source Data and Information**

The process reviews will be completed with the active participation from each county child welfare agency. The process begins with review of the agency's child welfare data, beginning with the data submitted by each agency on the CW Workforce Data Book. Many other sources of data are then used to further explore factors that impact services provided to children and families. These data sources include XPTR/XNET, Client Services Data Warehouse, the Management Assistance site through UNC, data from consumer calls, feedback from Children's Program Representatives and other Division staff, and conversations and/or focus groups with county agency staff about the meaning of the numbers. These conversations produce questions by county and Division staff regarding practices and outcomes. The questions become the driver for the case sample selection for an onsite process review. Local staff participation as reviewers, especially supervisors, is critical to assure active engagement in a transparent and inclusive review. A debriefing is scheduled at the conclusion of the onsite visit to review all of the data, identify areas for program development, and begin formulating a plan in response to any findings.

### **Program Development Plans (PDP)**

At the conclusion of the review, the county child welfare agency will receive a report documenting the results of the review. The data in the report provides a baseline to measure progress in further developing local programs. In response to the report, each county will formulate a Program Development Plan (PDP) which will become the focus of the interaction and technical assistance provided by the Division. The Directors' Association has long cited this as a need in state-local interactions. The effort seeks to maximize the available state and county resources to address program needs, providing the centerpiece of the collaborative work between the Division and the county child welfare agency to improve outcomes for children and families in the county and subsequently in North Carolina. The CW Program Monitoring Team will assist the county staff in developing the plan with active participation of the Children's Program Representative. The final PDP will be approved by the county and the Division through the CW Program Monitoring Team as the focal point for program development.

### **Plan Implementation, Sustainability, and Technical Assistance**

As part of the REAP/CQI effort (Reaching for Excellence and Accountability in Practice/Continuous Quality Improvement), the successful implementation and sustainability of the changes outlined in the PDP is critical. The Children's Program Representatives will take the lead role in providing or arranging for technical assistance in implementing and measuring progress of the PDP. The CW Program Monitoring Team will receive updates on the progress in implementing the plan. At these points, the Division and county staff will evaluate whether the changes made are producing the desired results, and if not, examine ways and means to revise the plan. In addition to the progress reports provided by the county agency, other data will be tracked to assure success of the program development plan, ultimately improving the outcomes for the state outcome measures.

### **The Process Review Cycle**

The progress on PDP's will be reviewed quarterly. A thorough data evaluation will be completed with county staffs every 6 months with onsite process reviews completed annually. The process reviews will include a Lead Reviewer from the CW Program Monitoring Team and additional Division staff, and county staff assigned by the agency Director. A schedule will be available by January, 2016.

### **Periodic Reviews of the Process**

To maintain a learning environment, there will be a six month cycle for evaluating review process. Many lessons are learned in the process reviews that should be included in the process, but any changes in tools and formats should also not change with every review. Through team debriefings and feedback via surveys of county staff, a list of revisions will be evaluated for inclusion in the next updates to the review tools and processes. Any changes in the process will be made in January and July and a list of the

revisions will be published in a Dear County Director Letter. With special thanks to the county agencies that have completed the initial reviews, the basic tools and processes have been developed as a platform for what would be relatively minor revisions.

### **Program Monitoring and County Agencies with Quality Assurance Processes**

One area that will need special attention is the scope of the process reviews in county agencies that have a quality assurance system in place or are engaged in the current CFSSR. Additional time will be spent with the agencies to explore the most effective and efficient way for the processes to complement each other. It is expected that both agency and Division approaches to process reviews will be enhanced with a collaborative interface.

### **Evaluation Tools**

The county version of the case review tools are attached for use with the caveat that revisions may be made by the Division and reissued in January and July. These tools have protected cells where there are questions or formulas. The rest of the cells are open for county staffs to add questions or make comments for county use.

Attachment 1: Screen Out Review Tool	For use in evaluating screened out CPS reports
Attachment 2: Intake and Assessment Review Tool	For use in evaluating screened in reports and the CPS assessment completed. It includes evaluation of screened in reports on open assessments and the initiation of assessments of those reports
Attachment 3: Intake and Assessment Reference Guide	Provides the policy and practice references and guidance in responding to Intake and Assessment Review Tool questions
Attachment 4: In Home Review Tool	For use in evaluating open or closed CPS In Home cases
Attachment 5: In Home Reference Guide	Provides the policy and practice references and guidance in responding to the In Home Review Tool questions
Attachment 6: Foster Care Review Tool	For use in evaluating foster care cases
Attachment 7: Foster Care Reference Guide	Provides the policy and practice reference and guidance in responding to the Foster Care Review Tool questions.

Many of the tools currently are still in formative stages and feedback from county partners is welcome and will be reviewed as revisions are considered. As time permits, the Program Monitors and Children's Program Representatives can be made available to provide consultation and guidance on use of the tools.

Please contact your Children's Program Representative or Jeff Olson, Program Manager at 919-527-6404 or at [Jeffrey.olson@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Jeffrey.olson@dhhs.nc.gov) with questions about this letter.

Sincerely,



Kevin Kelley, MSW  
Section Chief, Child Welfare Services

Attachments (7)

CWS-08-2015