

The Charter of the North Carolina Child Welfare Supervision Advisory Committee

Background

The field of public child welfare increasingly is focusing on supervision as a strategy for improving practice and outcomes. Across the United States, it is clear supervisors are the most stable element of the child welfare system. Supervisors' involvement and support, as keepers of any agency's culture, is crucial to introduce and achieve systemic change. This view of the value of child welfare supervision is supported by research. Supervision has been empirically linked to organizational, worker and client outcomes – particularly staff recruitment and retention.

In March 2007, North Carolina (NC) participated in the second round of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). As part of that process, a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) was developed to address the areas of needed improvement identified in the CFSR. Accountability was a theme of the State's PIP, including accountability in supervision.

Supervisors maintain the responsibility for holding social workers accountable for adherence to NC's practice model and influence the climate of the work environment with those they supervise. NC's practice model is designed to meet the safety, permanency and well-being needs of children and families. A child welfare supervisor must balance between holding staff accountable and supporting professional growth. This is a multifaceted process that models the skills social workers must use with children and families to achieve positive outcomes and realize the full potential of each staff member.

North Carolina's child welfare program is state supervised and county-administered. The Children's Services Committee of the North Carolina Association of County Directors of Departments of Social Services (the Committee) is the primary vehicle for communication, consideration and adoption of policy and system changes related to the North Carolina Division of Social Services (NCDSS). In recognizing the importance of supervisors, NCDSS explored options as to how supervisors could be better supported and supervision improved. NCDSS presented a proposal for a Supervision Work Group to the Committee and asked for voluntary representatives from the counties to participate. The resultant Supervision Work Group members comprised:

- Representatives from over twenty counties (including child welfare supervisors, program managers, and assistant county directors);
- Five representatives from NCDSS (with responsibilities entailing the CFSR, training, policy, local support to counties and the Special Assistance Improvement Team);
- A representative from a state university (School of Social Work, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill); and

- Two contracted trainers of supervisors.

This Supervision Work Group was supported through technical assistance provided by the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement¹ (NRCOI) and the National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data and Technology¹ (NRC-CWDT). Three consultants from the NRC's (Steven Preister, Anna Stone and Joe Murray) facilitated the development process which began with the first meeting of the Supervision Work Group on October 2, 2007.

Through technical assistance provided by the NRC's, the North Carolina Child Welfare Supervision Work Group developed a strategic plan with 31 action steps to support and improve child welfare supervision in North Carolina. This plan focused on continuous improvement to produce results while growing social work staff. Upon approval of the plan by NCDSS, the work group began working to implement the action steps.

The technical assistance provided by the NRC's was completed, as scheduled in 2009. Recognizing its contribution to enhancing supervision within the state, the work group was asked to continue. The work group adopted the name "Child Welfare Supervision Advisory Committee (CWSAC)." The role of the CWSAC has evolved to a partnership with the NCDSS and University partners to enhance supervision through career development, professional growth, and developing and promoting best practices in supervision. The CWSAC recommended a formal charter be developed to support an on-going committee to monitor and continuously advise NCDSS leadership about supervision.

A charter is an official, written instrument, executed by the participating parties, that formally specifies the entity's purpose and other elements of its work. These are some of the benefits of a formal charter:

- A charter can help the standing committee's credibility – it provides a formal definition and identity.
- It is an instrument that will help others understand the purpose of the standing committee.
- It can help other potential partners understand how they can participate in the work of the standing committee.
- A charter can help establish a system of accountability – it defines the purpose, functions, relationships, boundaries, and responsibilities. Defining these can help the standing committee remain functional and productive.

Vision

We envision Supervisors as skilled practice change agents who improve child welfare services in North Carolina by promoting best practices, consistency, job-satisfaction and retention, and thereby improving achievement of positive outcomes for children and families.

¹ A service of the Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Purpose/Functions

Through partnership with the NCDSS, the purpose of the CWSAC is to advise the leadership of the NCDSS on continuous improvement of supervision and monitor the implementation and effects of strategies adopted to achieve such improvement.

Committee functions include:

- Monitoring the implementation and effects of the NCDSS strategic plan for supporting and improving child welfare supervision and reporting the results to NCDSS leadership.
- Monitoring developments in child welfare supervision across the country to identify emerging best practices.
- Providing supervisory support and advocacy by the development of a peer-to-peer network.
- Providing recommendations to the NCDSS on areas needing improvement and consistency in supervisory practice to include:
 - Providing influence/advice on policy matters as requested by NCDSS and approved by committee leadership
 - Providing influence/advice to the Staff Development team on professional development opportunities for supervisors

Membership, Leadership and Terms of Service

Typically, the committee's membership consists of approximately 25 members:

- The CWSAC and NCDSS will strive for diverse membership from urban, rural, suburban counties as well as statewide geographic distribution.
- Line supervisors from the county departments of social services including equal representation from each county "level" and region of the state. Any current member may recommend his/her replacement from their region for nomination. New members can also be obtained from the Regional Meetings held by the Children's Program Representatives. Should a supervisor assume another position while serving on the committee, he/she may complete his/her current term of appointment.
- The county director or the director's designee must sign a commitment letter for the supervisor to participate
- Representatives from the NCDSS assigned by the Child Welfare Section Chief
- From a university within North Carolina, at least one faculty member with a professional focus on child welfare supervision.

Members are appointed for a two year term of service, staggered for the purpose of continuity. At the completion of the two year service term, a committee member may stay involved with the committee through service on ad hoc sub committees or may be re-appointed for additional terms of service.

Additional members may be added to the CSWAC by recommendation to the CWSAC Co-Chairs and the NCDSS leadership.

Prior to the April meeting each year, a representative from the nominating committee shall notify the Co-Chairs about expiring memberships and the need to have new members appointed. The Co-Chairs will assure the newly appointed members will be notified of the date, time and location of the July meeting for the transition. The member rotating off will be responsible for providing an information packet to the newly appointed member prior to the July meeting date.

Expectations of Members

There are basic expectations of supervisors as members of CWSAC. At a minimum, they include:

- Attending Quarterly onsite meetings (July, October, January, April)
- Completing assigned tasks within time frames
- Monthly participation in Committee activities
- Accepting appointments to ad hoc work groups

Consistent with the effort to be accountable, those members who are unable to fulfill their responsibilities may be asked to step down from the CWSAC by the Executive Committee.

Transition Plan

July is designated as the month of transition for CWSAC members after a supervisor has served two full years on the committee. Both the incoming and departing members will attend this meeting. This will provide an opportunity for networking, exchange of ideas and a structured process so historical information can be passed along and the momentum of the CWSAC work can continue.

The other members of the committee serve because of the positions they hold in the NCDSS and the university and serve as long as they hold these positions.

Leadership

The CWSAC is chaired by two county representatives (Co-Chairs) and one NCDSS representative. One county Co-Chair will be elected for a two-year term by the members during the CWSAC's first meeting of each fiscal year. The county Co-Chairs prepare the agendas for the meetings, convene the committee and chair the meetings. The Co-Chairs will also record attendance.

The retiring co-chair and CWSAC members rotating off the Committee will be part of an ad hoc committee to nominate a new co-chair to submit to the membership for approval. Additional nominations can be made from the membership, and the Co-chair selected by a majority vote of the membership.

There will be an Executive Committee which will meet monthly composed of the Co-Chairs, Sub-Committee Chairs and the NCDSS representative. The Executive Committee will be responsible for coordinating the work of the committee and assuring there is not duplication of effort.

A member of the committee shall be appointed as a Scribe by the Co-Chairs.

- The scribe shall serve a term of one year, transition to occur each July.
- Attends all meetings and informs co-chairs if unable to attend
- Writes or types notes according to agenda items as scheduled
- Sends copy of minutes to Co-Chairs within two weeks of meeting date

Sub-committees

The Child Welfare Supervision Advisory Committee can create standing sub-committees to focus on broad supervision activities and issues. The areas that these sub-committees address are determined to be critical in child welfare supervision by the CWSAC. Each sub-committee will have a chairperson who will be responsible for convening meetings and facilitating discussion of the sub-committee. Membership on the subcommittees does not have to be limited to the members of the CWSAC but can include other supervisors and other internal and external stakeholders, based on the sub-committee's foci.

Work Groups

The Executive Committee of the Child Welfare Supervisors Advisory Committee may appoint work groups that are time limited and focused on specific tasks, such as testing new tools, consulting on policy, reviewing curricula, or conference planning. A facilitator will be appointed, and membership of these ad hoc groups will be chosen from the committee membership and other sources in the state.

Changes

This Charter is intended to be a living document. Changes to this Charter can be made at any time by recommendation to the leadership of the CWSAC. Intent to amend the Charter should be noted on the agenda for the meeting where a change will be proposed, and the agenda should be sent to the committee members prior to the meeting to give participants time for consideration of the proposed change.

Charter Acceptance

Approval of the vision, ways, and means outlined in this Charter are evidenced by:

- The commitment letter signed by each Director for a supervisor to participate in CWSAC, and
- The participation of NCDSS and University staff in CWSAC activities.

Approval

This Charter was reviewed and approved by the membership on December 20, 2012.