



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

325 North Salisbury Street • Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2408
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Michael F. Easley, Governor
Carmen Hooker Odom, Secretary

Pheon E. Beal, Director
(919) 733-3055

August 1, 2003

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

ATTENTION: DIRECTORS, CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS, WORK FIRST PROGRAM MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS

Subject: Expansion of the Multiple Response System

It is with great pleasure and excitement that we have received legislative authority to proceed with the expansion of our Multiple Response System (MRS) demonstration project. The General Assembly has authorized the expansion of the MRS demonstration project to a total of 33 county departments of social services. This number includes the original 10 MRS demonstration counties and 23 other counties. We may exceed the maximum number if it can be determined that we have the resources to accommodate more counties. The Division is prepared to make statutory changes for statewide implementation during the 2004 regular session of the General Assembly.

The current expansion provides us the opportunity to build on the efforts of the original 10 counties to use the family-centered principles of partnership woven throughout MRS's seven strategies to achieve our mission of ensuring safe, nurturing and permanent families for children. We will also be able to continue our efforts of accomplishing a profound reform of child welfare services across the state. The family-centered principles of partnership are that 1) everyone desires respect, 2) everyone needs to be heard, 3) everyone has strengths, 4) judgments can wait, 5) partners share power; and, 6) partnership is a process. These provide the basis for MRS's a strategic inter-dependent system of service provision. The seven strategies of MRS are:

1. Implementation of a strengths-based, structured intake process
2. A choice of two approaches to reports of child abuse, neglect or dependency
3. Coordination between law enforcement agencies and child protective services for the investigative assessment approach
4. A redesign of in-home services
5. Utilization of a team-decision making approach in Child and Family Team meetings

6. Implementation of Shared Parenting meetings in placement cases
7. Collaboration between WorkFirst and child welfare programs

In an effort to choose the counties for the expansion, we are requesting your agency submit a statement of commitment along with a plan outlining your preparedness to become a MRS demonstration site. Your statement of commitment should include your vision for the agency as it implements MRS as well as the items listed below. With the completion of the “*Cornerstone I*” training and the testimonies of the 10 MRS counties, your agency and community partners have had an opportunity to think about your implementation strategies. Your statement of commitment and plan should reflect briefly how you intend to implement all seven strategies of MRS. We recognize that some counties may have already begun or fully implemented some of these strategies. All 100 counties have implemented Strategy #1 “Strengths Based Intake”. Your plan should also discuss anticipated organizational changes and the need for on-going public education. The 10 MRS counties stand ready to assist and provide consultation to you in your efforts to implement MRS in your county.

The selection criteria for the expansion of MRS will be based on the county’s readiness to proceed should more than 23 counties express interest in being part of the expansion. The Division will look at the county’s geographic location, urban versus rural characteristics, size, plan readiness, and statements of commitment.

The plan should reflect your answers to the following:

1. What is your agency’s experience in implementing the structured, strengths-based intake system? Are reporters sharing the family’s strengths?
2. What have you done, or plan to do, to educate your community partners about MRS and its seven strategies? What is your external marketing plan?
3. What have you done, or plan to do, to educate your agency staff about MRS and its seven strategies? What is your internal marketing plan?
4. How would the two approaches to CPS reports be “rolled out” in your county (geographically, by type of report, staff member rotation, etc.)?
5. Do you have current memorandums of agreement with local law enforcement agencies and the District Attorney? If not, what are your plans to implement them?
6. How do you plan to assign cases and provide administration and oversight to social workers doing family assessments and keeping case responsibility for in-home services cases? Do your plans include social workers keeping cases from assessment into in-home services? If not, what are your plans?
7. What is your agency’s capacity to meet with families outside normal business hours to initiate family centered assessments, provide in-home services, conduct Child and Family Team meetings; and, conduct Shared Parenting meetings?
8. How do you plan to organize and facilitate Child and Family Team meetings?
9. What is your experience with Shared Parenting meetings? How do you plan to implement them for all children entering foster care?
10. What is the current relationship between Work First and child welfare in your agency? Describe your plan to increase the level of collaboration between them?
11. What is your capacity to attend regular meetings with other MRS counties?

12. What is your capacity to participate in the on-going evaluation of the MRS and its need for data? This will require some manual submission of data of a monthly basis. What is your capacity to submit data manually?
13. What re-organization will be necessary in your agency to implement all seven strategies of MRS? How do you plan to accomplish this re-organization?
14. It is not expected that each of the seven strategies be “rolled out” at the same time. What are your time frames for the initiation of each of the seven strategies? Your implementation plan should be thoughtful. It should start off small and expand in a planned, intentional manner. What is your anticipated “start date” for implementation of each of the seven strategies? By what date do you anticipate complete implementation of all seven strategies?
15. Based on this roll out plan how many county staff persons would you estimate would need to receive training on:
 - Policies and procedures related to MRS;
 - Skills practice regarding implementing the family assessment approach;
 - Advanced skills practice regarding family centered practice skills;
 - An overview of the implementation of Child And Family Team meetings;
 - Facilitator training for child and family team meetings;
 - Shared Parenting?
16. What is your capacity and commitment for staff to participate in on-going training concerning MRS? Please list the name, telephone number and email address for a contact person with whom the Division can work to plan and coordinate training for your staff.

We recommend that you use the bullets as a guide to assist you in developing a plan; however it does not have to follow these bullets exactly. We acknowledge that you may not be able to answer each question in detail. You should cover the material and questions raised in each of the bullets in your plan as best you can. Emphasis should be placed on how your agency will implement the seven strategies of MRS using the family-centered principles of partnership. Factors the 10 original counties have found to be vital include a deliberate, well-planned roll out of the two approaches to CPS reports, flexible scheduling, Child and Family Team facilitation, community and agency education, training, and program administration and re-organization.

Your plan should be submitted to the Division’s Work First and Child Welfare Policy Team by August 29, 2003. Please address them to the attention of Tony Troop. You may submit your plan through the mail or electronically through e-mail. Selection of the expansion counties will be completed by September 15, 2003. We anticipate implementation of the expansion on October 1, 2003. Implementation includes a period of time for preparation and training of the selected counties. Any questions concerning the expansion of MRS or your statement of commitment and plan should be directed to Mr. Troop. He may be contacted by telephone at (919) 733-4624 or e-mail. His e-mail address is Tony.Troop@ncmail.net.

Sincerely,



JoAnn Lamm, Program Administrator
Family Support and Child Welfare Services Section

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