



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

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Michael F. Easley, Governor
Dempsey Benton, Secretary

Sherry S. Bradsher, Director
(919) 733-3055

April 3, 2008

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**SUBJECT: NORTH CAROLINA'S 2008 CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM
IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

North Carolina's Program Improvement Plan (PIP) was approved by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) with an effective date of April 1, 2008, and is the 1st state PIP to be approved in the 2nd round of Child and Family Services Reviews. North Carolina's PIP represents a focus on continuous improvement by strengthening family centered practice and a concentrated effort to deepen our Multiple Response System (MRS) through the application of family centered practice with a System of Care (SOC) approach. The PIP was developed through a collaborative work group process in conjunction with staff from county departments of social services, youth, parents, foster parents, service providers, and other child and family serving agencies. The PIP is not a new initiative or project; it is a continuation of the work we have already accomplished through MRS/SOC. There are five themes in NC's PIP: Child, Youth and Family Involvement, Cultural Competence, Interagency Collaboration, Court Involvement and Accountability.

The PIP is ultimately about improving outcomes for children and families and this work can only be accomplished through collaboration between the Division and county departments of social services. To indicate this collaboration and agreement, this letter is signed by the Section Chief from Family Support and Child Welfare Services at the Division and the president of the North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services. We believe the goals and action steps identified in the PIP will impact direct practice. Quarterly progress reports of our work are required and will include specific items such as: sign-in sheets from MRS/SOC regional meetings, sign-in sheets from regional supervisor meetings facilitated by Children's Program Representatives, and findings from our Quality Assurance Reviews. DSS Directors are to convene focus groups of foster youth in agency custody annually and will submit the agenda from those focus groups to the Division for submission to ACF for the required quarterly reports. As you review the PIP, you will see that the PIP is designed to effect real change on the direct practice level. This will be accomplished through direct service provision at the county level, and through policy revision, training, and consultation/technical assistance through MRS/SOC meetings and our Children's Program Representatives at the state level.

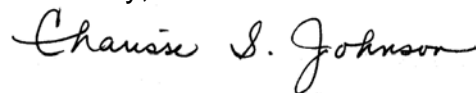
We encourage you to review the PIP, as there are detailed strategies which address all of North Carolina's areas needing improvement noted in the March 2007 on-site review. There are some items that will potentially be more impactful and they are listed below:

- **Supervision Model**
- **Quality Assurance System**
- **Structured Decision Making Tools**
- **Cultural Diversity Training**
- **Child and Family Team Training**
- **Alternative Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA)**
- **Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment and Retention**
- **Services to Youth**
- **Policy Changes Regarding: Court Involvement, Child and Family Teams, Fatherhood Involvement, American Indian Identification and ICWA Compliance**

You may access the PIP on NCDSS website at: <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/stats/cw.htm>

The PIP has given us the opportunity to take a critical look at our system and to build on what we have learned from our experience in implementing MRS. The Division recognizes the comprehensive approach needed to implement the PIP and the Division is committed to move quickly to make the necessary changes in order to give you time to implement and effect change. Working together is key to ensuring that we achieve better outcomes for children and families as it relates to safety, permanency and well-being. Please contact Candice Britt at candice.britt@ncmail.net if you have questions.

Sincerely,



Charisse Johnson, Chief
Family Support and Child Welfare Services



Karen P. Hoyle, President
North Carolina Association of
County Directors of Social Services

FSCWS-16-08