



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

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Courier # 56-20-25
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Michael F. Easley, Governor
Carmen Hooker Odom, Secretary

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

October 2, 2003

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES:

ATTENTION: CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS

SUBJECT: FEDERAL CHILD WELFARE SAFETY AND PERMANENCY OUTCOMES

In March 2001, North Carolina experienced our initial federal Child and Family Services review. As a part of that review, the Children's Bureau provided North Carolina with outcome data related to the performance of our child welfare system. Each year these outcome data are updated and provided to North Carolina in order to determine where we are in terms of Program Improvement. As you will recall, a State whose data did not meet the national standard in a review were required to implement a program improvement plan (PIP) designed to improve the State's performance on the data indicators. The PIP allows the State to identify issues that may contribute to nonconformity and plan action steps and technical assistance to improve State performance. The PIP process included negotiating with the Children's Bureau benchmarks that NC would achieve towards meeting the national standards. As a result of this PIP, we have implemented many policy changes to enhance our practice.

North Carolina is fast approaching the end of our PIP period, which is December 28, 2003. The latest data analysis provided by the Children's Bureau and confirmed by Division staff using the same statistical program, indicates that we must focus our attention to achieving the agreed upon benchmarks. Failure to achieve the established benchmarks will result in financial penalties being imposed on North Carolina. The six outcomes areas that are measured come from two datasets: one known as the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), which captures abuse and neglect data on an annual basis that is pulled from our Central Registry (DSS-5104), and the second one used is the Adoption and Foster Care Reporting System (AFCARS) which captures foster care and adoption data from the Child Placement and Payment System (DSS-5094) and our Adoption Indexing Management System.

The NCANDS data is reported on a calendar year and our current data file is from January – December 2002. The AFCARS data is reported on April 15 and November 15 of each year and our current data file includes data submitted on November 15, 2001, April 15, 2002 and November 15, 2002. The time period for these data covers October 1, 2001 through September 30, 2002. The six outcome areas are:

- 1.1 Recurrence of maltreatment (Central Registry)
- 2.1 Incidence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care (Central Registry and Child Placement and Payment System)
- 4.1 Length of time to achieve reunification (Child Placement and Payment System)
- 4.2 Foster cares re-entries (Child Placement and Payment System)
- 5.1 Length of time to achieve adoption (Child Placement and Payment System)
- 6.1 Stability of foster care placement (Child Placement and Payment System)

We have a small window of opportunity to have an impact on the benchmarks. Our time period that we can impact the data begins immediately and ends when we are required to submit the next submissions for NCANDS and AFCARS to the Children's Bureau. NCANDS data will be submitted in March 2004 and the last AFCARS data submission will be April 2004. The Division has created charts for each of the 100 counties, in which we have identified the status of each county's outcome data in relation to the established benchmarks. Attached you will find a review of the federal outcomes and our status along with your own county specific chart. Please consider the following interpretation when reviewing these charts:

In the "2002 Measures" column the following categories are included:

1. The County's numeric percentage
2. No Occurrences-
 - a. For Recurrence of Maltreatment, Maltreatment in Foster Care, or Re-Entry into Foster Care, "no occurrences" means that the benchmark was met due to no instances of maltreatment or re-entry.
 - b. For Reunified in less than 12 months, and adopted in less than 24 months, "No Occurrences" means that there were no children that fell within the identified range, but there were other children identified in the data that were reunified with their families in more than 12 months or adopted in more than 24 months. This category statement could mean that the data outcome for that indicator needs improvement.
3. N/A – There were no measures for that indicator.

In the Status of County level Benchmarks" column the following categories are included:

1. Needs Improvement – This means that you have not met the defined benchmark.
2. Met Benchmark – This means that you have met the defined benchmark.
3. No data – There were no applicable data available.

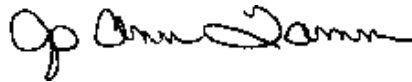
During the next few weeks your Children's Program Representative will conduct on-site visits to review your county level federal outcome measures with you and your staff. If you do not currently have an assigned CPR due to a vacancy, we have identified

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Division staff that will be contacting you and providing consultation. The CPR will work with you and your staff around each measure in which you do not meet North Carolina's benchmarks. They will review policy, data entry processes and practices that might be impacting the data. If there are data coding or data entry errors on individual cases identified, the process for correction will be discussed. We ask that you begin your own analysis by using the attached reports. We encourage you to continue to conduct your on-going analysis using the reports that can be retrieved through XPTR and the Experiences and Key Indicators reports provided by the Division. If you have additional questions around these measures, staff from the Data Management and Review Team(919-733-3801) will be available.

Sincerely,



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

JAL:asj

Attachment

CC: Pheon Beal
Sherry Bradsher
Sarah Barham
Family Support and Child Welfare Services Team Leaders
Children's Programs Representatives
Work First Program Representatives
Local Business Liaisons

FSCWS-19-03

Federal Outcomes Measures

- 1.1 Outcome measure: Recurrence of maltreatment (Safety measure using NCANDS data)

Calendar Year January -December 2002

Federal Standard: A state meets the national standard for this indicator if, of all children who were victims of substantiated abuse and/or neglect during the first six months of the period under review, **6.1%** or fewer had another substantiated report within six months.

Benchmark—7.1 %

North Carolina's Current Status—9.0% (Needs Improvement)

- 2.1 Outcome measure: Maltreatment in Foster Care (Safety measure using NCANDS data)

Calendar Year January -September 2002

Federal Standard: A state meets the national standard for this indicator if, or all children in foster care in the state during the period under review, the percentage of children who were the subject of substantiated maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff member is **0.57%** or less. The Division is currently renegotiating the benchmark for this standard. We are also waiting on additional information from the federal government related to a connection between NCANDS and AFCARS data so that additional analysis can be conducted on this measure. With the additional information, there may be an increase in the outcomes reported for each county.

Benchmark—0.69%

North Carolina's Current Status—0.95% (Needs Improvement)

- 4.1 Outcome measure: Time to reunification (Permanence measure using AFCARS data)

Federal Fiscal Year data

Standard: A state meets the national standard for this indicator if, of all children who were reunified with their parents or caretakers at the time of discharge from foster care, **76.2 % or more** were reunified in less than 12 months from the time of latest removal from the home.

Benchmark—60%

North Carolina's Current Status—60% (Substantially achieved)

- 4.2 Outcome measure: Children re-entering foster care (Permanence measure using AFCARS data)

Federal Fiscal Year data

Federal Standard: A state meets the national standard for this indicator if, of all children who entered foster care during the year under review, **8.6% or fewer** of those children re-entered foster care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode.

Benchmark—8.6%

North Carolina's Current Status—1.2% (Substantially achieved)

5.1 Outcome measure: Time to adoption (Permanence measure using AFCARS data)
Federal Fiscal Year data

Federal Standard: A state meets the national standard for this indicator if, of all children who exited foster care during the year under review to a finalized adoption, **32% or more** children exited care in less than 24 months from the time of the latest removal from the home.

Benchmark—28.9%

North Carolina's Current Status—32% (Substantially achieved)

6.1 Outcome measure: Placement stability (Permanence measure using AFCARS data)

Federal Fiscal Year data

Standard: A state meets the national standard for this indicator if, of all children who have been in foster care for less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from the home, **86.7% or more** children have had no more than two placement settings.

Benchmark—63.2%

North Carolina's Current Status—58% (Needs Improvement)