



MEMORANDUM

to: County Directors, Rick Zechman
from: Kristen Johnson and Andrea Bogie
subject: Description of the Research Study for Dissemination
date: June 16, 2008

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services (the Division) contracted with the Children's Research Center (CRC) a nonprofit research organization, to examine workers' completion of Structured Decision Making (SDM) assessments and determine how the application of SDM assessments could be strengthened, which includes a validation study of the risk assessment. The objectives of the research are to:

- 1. Conduct a validation study to examine how well the current risk assessment estimates the likelihood of future child maltreatment for families assessed by county departments of social services (DSS), and, if necessary, improve its ability to accurately identify high risk families and prioritize them for service.
2. Identify ways to strengthen the case management system implemented by the Division.

The primary purpose of this research is to ensure that the risk assessment accurately classifies families by the likelihood of future child abuse and neglect. A second goal is to identify how SDM assessment practices can be strengthened. Findings will be presented by state, not by county. If counties wish, however, we will provide them information about families sampled from their region.

The research will be conducted by asking DSS staff to provide assessments completed for select families assessed between April 1 and September 30, 2006. In an attempt to minimize the workload associated with the project, the lowest possible number of families were sampled, and sampling was spread out across counties. CRC staff will key and clean the assessment data collected from case files, and match it to data from North Carolina's management information system (MIS). This research has the potential to help North Carolina improve the effectiveness of its child welfare service delivery, and would not be possible without your help.

Enclosed/attached are the sampled CPS assessments. The sample includes CPS assessments with no CPS in-home or out-of-home services provided, CPS assessments that resulted in a CPS in-home services case, and CPS assessments that resulted in an out-of-home case. For each family assessment sampled, please send the following forms:

- dss-5231 North Carolina Safety Assessment;
dss-5230-ia North Carolina Family Risk Assessment of Abuse/Neglect;
dss-5228 NC Case Decision Summary/Initial Case Plan; and
dss-5229-ia Family Assessment of Strengths and Needs.

In addition, if the CPS assessment resulted in a CPS in-home and or out-of-home services case, please send the relevant:

[dss-5239](#) In Home Family Services Agreement or
[dss-5240](#) Out of Home Family Services Agreement.

Please also send reassessment forms for the first three reassessments:

[dss-5226-ia](#) North Carolina Family Risk Reassessment of Abuse/Neglect or
[dss-5227](#) North Carolina Family Reunification Assessment;
and
[dss-5229-ia](#) Family Assessment of Strengths and Needs.

If you would like to make notes about any investigation or case, please feel free to add a cover sheet to each packet of forms, and or make a note on the sample log sheet. If you cannot locate a file, or SDM assessments were missing from the file, please note this on the sample log for the relevant investigation/case.

Please copy and collate the forms for a given family assessment/reassessments. Please gather all forms from your office/county, as well as the sample log, and mail them using Federal Express account number 4104-2476-2 to:

Kristen Johnson
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If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Kristen Johnson or Andrea Bogie at (608)831-1180 or by email (kjohnson@mw.nccd-crc.org and abogie@mw.nccd-crc.org respectively). Thank you so much for your participation in this project, the risk validation study would not be possible without your help.