

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

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Michael F. Easley, Governor  
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Pheon E. Beal, Director  
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November 6, 2003

**DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

**ATTENTION: CHILD WELFARE SUPERVISORS**

**Subject: Revised Child and Family Services Review Protocol, Instructions and Instruments**

As a result of the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) in North Carolina in March 2001 and the subsequent Program Improvement Plan for the State, the Division recognized a need to make some significant changes to the biennial review process. In collaboration with the Children's Services Advisory Committee and the Children's Services Committee of the North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services, the Division revised the biennial review process and review instruments to mirror the federal CFSR. The revised process was fully implemented effective October 1, 2001.

In 2002, the federal government issued a revised CFSR instrument that the Division implemented effective August 2002. The Division of Social Services completed its first full biennium using the CFSR process as of June 30, 2003. The second biennium began effective July 1, 2003.

A second revision to the federal CFSR instrument and instructions was released in July 2003 just after the beginning of the new biennium. This revision included additional clarification and instructions to the items that federal reviewers had raised during the federal reviews of states. These revisions do not affect the criteria used for rating any of the items or outcomes. Following is a breakdown of the changes:

- General instructions and Quality Assurance checklist: Added language directing reviewers to document the source of the information presented.
- Item Instructions: To enhance flow and consistency, reordered the instructions; below is the most common order among the 23 items:
  1. Purpose
  2. Who the item covers (for example, all children in the family)

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3. Definition of terms (if any)
  4. The description of the considerations the reviewer should use to determine a rating
  5. Circumstances in which cases should be rated as a strength, area needing improvement, or not applicable
- Discussion of Outcomes: When it was applicable, following "Substantially Achieved," changed the phrase "Both applicable items ..." to "All applicable items ..." because in some cases one of the two Items might be not applicable (and the one that was applicable was rated as a strength). The reviewer would therefore note that "all applicable items" were rated as a strength.

Also added the language "disregard items rated as not applicable" following "Partially Achieved" in the Discussion of Outcomes to clarify that reviewers should not consider Items rated "not applicable" when rating this Outcome.

- Item 2: Clarified the language in the instruction to inform reviewers that this item focuses on all substantiated reports of repeat maltreatment and reports of maltreatment addressed through an alternative response system that resulted in the State later determining that the child(ren) either had been maltreated or was at risk of being maltreated. Also clarified that reviewers should count substantiated reports of maltreatment by foster care providers and staff of placement facilities only if there were two or more incidents of maltreatment in the foster care placement within a 6-month period, since this item refers to repeat maltreatment that is due to the same general circumstances or the same perpetrator.
- Item 7: Changed specific section references to the Adoption and Safe Families Act to the Social Security Act.
- Item 17: Under Core Questions A5 and B4, added language indicating where in the chart reviewers should provide the answers. Within the chart headings, added the number of the Core Questions that reviewers will provide information about.
- Items 19 and 20: Revised language in the instructions to clarify that reviewers should focus on the needs of the child(ren) and/or parent(s) not agency policy on caseworker visits when rating these items.

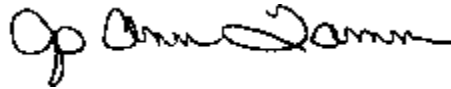
Although the new biennium has already begun, the Division has adapted this latest revised review instrument for North Carolina's use and implementation will begin **December 1, 2003**. We will continue to use the separate instrument for reviewing reports that are not accepted for investigation. Additionally, the Division has rewritten the CFSR protocol to add clarification as a result of questions that arose during the past biennium. There are no significant changes to the protocol itself. With both of these revisions, there should be no differences in ratings for the counties that are reviewed after December 1 than for those reviewed between July 1 and November 30.

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The revised protocol and instrument with accompanying instructions are attached, and hard copies will be mailed to each county Department of Social Services. Through this implementation of the revised instrument, we will continue to hold ourselves accountable for the same level of performance that the federal government will be holding the state accountable for our next federal review. We strongly urge each county to closely review the revised CFSR instrument and instructions.

We continue to believe that the CFSR process will significantly contribute to each county's ability to document substantial compliance with the federally approved outcome areas and ultimately to the state's ability to achieve substantial compliance and avoid financial sanctions. In addition to the hard copy of this letter and the review instrument, you will be able to access them on the Children's Services web site. If you have any questions regarding the CFSR, please contact Sara Anderson Mims at (919) 733-9461.

Sincerely,



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

JAL:sam  
Attachments

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

**FSCWS-29-03**