



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

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October 26, 2009

Dear County Directors of Social Services

ATTENTION: All Child Foster Care Services Program Administrators, Managers and Supervisors

SUBJECT: Individual County Detailed Reports on Preliminary FFY 2009 Foster Care Caseworker Visit Data

Within the next few days, you will receive, through your Children's Services Program Representative, a detailed report of your county's FFY 2009 Foster Care Caseworker Visit *preliminary* data. This report is being provided to assist you in your efforts to record complete and accurate data for foster care caseworker visits that occurred during the period October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009. The State is required to submit final data for FFY 2009 to the U.S. DHHS Administration for Children and Families (ACF) by December 15, 2009. As such, you will have until 5:00 PM, November 30, 2009 to enter data relevant to this report into the Child Placement and Payment System (CPPS) and the Multiple Response System (MRS).

The purpose of this letter is to familiarize you with the detailed data report and how it can be used to potentially improve your county's caseworker visit performance.

Background

The Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-288) established the requirement that, by October 1, 2011, 90 percent of children in foster care are visited by their caseworkers on a monthly basis, and that the majority of the visits occur in the residence of the child. States were required to develop yearly improvement target percentages towards meeting the 90 percent monthly caseworker visit (MCV) threshold and to report FFY 2007 baseline data, along with the yearly target percentages, in the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) submitted in June 2008. As specified in Section 424(e)(2)(B) of the Act, any State that fails to make the "requisite progress" specified by these targets is subject to a reduction in its Federal

financial participation (FFP) rate for Child Welfare Services under title IV-B, subpart 1 of the Act of from 1 to 5 percent depending on the degree by which the target level was not achieved.

Beginning in May 2007, ACF issued instructions to States regarding what data must be collected and how calculations were to be made to determine performance on two measures by which compliance with P.L. 109-288 would be assessed:

Measure 1: The percentage of children in foster care who were visited during *each and every* calendar month—determined by dividing the number of children who were visited *each and every* full calendar month that they were in care as reported by the State by the number of children served in foster care during the federal fiscal year. The quotient is multiplied by 100.

Measure 2: The percentage of visits that occurred in the residence of the child—determined by dividing the number of visit months that occurred in the child residences by the total number of visit months for children visited *each and every* full calendar month they were in care as reported by the State. This quotient is multiplied by 100.

As required, North Carolina developed and submitted the following 2007 Baseline and Target Percentages for FFYs 2008 – 2011:

Measure	2007 Baseline	Federal Fiscal Year Targets			
		2008	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of children in foster care visited each and every calendar month	38.77	45.17	57.98	77.20	90.00
Percentage of caseworker visits occurring in the residence of the child	73.45	73.64	74.03	74.61	75.00

Note: When evaluating the State’s performance, ACF rounds the targets and performance scores to the nearest whole percentage point.

FFY 2008 MCV Data

North Carolina’s FFY 2008 performance scores were 23% for Measure 1 and 80% for Measure 2. Our failure to meet the 2008 Measure 1 Target resulted in a penalty being imposed such that the FFP rate for the Title IV-B, subpart 1 Child Welfare Services program for FFY 2009 was reduced by 5 percent (from 75 to 70 percent). This penalty is being passed on to the counties whose individual scores failed to meet the 2008 Targets. North Carolina re-submitted FFY 2008 data to ACF in September 2009 in hopes of achieving a reduction in the IV-B penalty, but we have not yet received a response as to whether or not the revised data will be accepted.

Existing Tools for Monitoring MCV Data

As of late, much attention has been given to this issue and a great deal of effort has been made by both the State and counties to improve our FFY 2009 performance as much as possible. In the past, the State has provided information relevant to entering MCV information into MRS (see [Dear County Director Letter, Family Support and Child Welfare FSCWS-45-07](#), issued June 29, 2007 and [Performance Management/Reporting and Evaluation Management Administrative Letter No. PM-REM-AL 06-07](#), issued June 29, 2007) and has provided three State-sanctioned queries in the Client Services Data Warehouse (CSDW) to enable counties to monitor their progress towards compliance with the monthly visitation requirements (see [Performance Management/Reporting and Evaluation Management Administrative Letter No. PM-REM-AL 01-09](#) issued Jan. 23, 2009).

Many counties have commented that the CSDW queries, while helpful, provide too much information to facilitate efficiently “working” the list of foster children to determine if visits have been recorded into MRS. When these queries were originally developed, the intent was to “cast as wide a net” as possible to insure that no records of foster children were overlooked. Consequently, foster children over 18 (in CARS agreements) and those who came into care as the result of ICPC, Voluntary Placement Agreements, Relinquishment and transfer from another county were included in the query output, even though visit data for these children may not be able to be entered into MRS (see DCDL FSCWS-45-07). Information about Type of (Placement) Authority was included in the query results so that counties could identify these children. Once identified, it was thought that counties could, through the use of additional query criteria or filters, eliminate these records from the query output if desired.

Counties have also noted that the data sometimes contains records for children who have long since left foster care and whose records are closed in CPPS. We are aware of the presence of these records, which are caused by duplicate, incomplete, records that were created in CPPS long ago through a combination of keying errors and issues with the system that have since been corrected. The State is unable at this time to positively identify these “false” records or to remove them from CPPS, but we are working on a plan to do so in the future. In the interim, it was thought that counties, having once identified these records, could use additional query criteria or filters to eliminate these records from the query output if desired. Help is available from the CSDW Support Team, or from Performance Management/Reporting and Evaluation Management staff, if needed, if a county wishes to modify these queries by applying additional criteria or filters.

As advised in PM-REM-AL 01-09, using the third CSDW caseworker visit query “**Children In Foster Care and Corresponding FC Visits for Specific Month - Detail Report**”, when run for the current reporting month, will probably be the most useful of the three with regard to monitoring the recording of visit data in a proactive, ongoing manner. This query allows you to see for the current month, up to the night before you run the query, whether or not a visit has been entered into MRS for each child in care.

Preliminary FFY 2009 Data

In response to requests for more tools to monitor MCV data, the State has committed to providing detailed reports of monthly caseworker visits entered into MRS to the counties on a quarterly basis. The first of these, which is the primary subject of this letter, concerns the preliminary analysis of MCV data for FFY 2009. These reports are developed using the same process used to report State-level data to ACF. This process currently involves use of both the Client Services Data Warehouse to pull the data and third-party software to compile the results, format the reports and calculate the Measure 1 and Measure 2 scores.

The preliminary data for FFY 2009 is just that, and is being provided so that counties can have an opportunity to enter additional valid MCV data into MRS, or to correct data in CPPS that might impact whether or not a specific child should be included in the FFY 2009 foster care population.

The detailed MCV report lists (along with the county number) the SIS Client IDs of all children under 19 years of age for whom the county had placement authority during the Federal fiscal year. This list reflects data as it existed in CPPS as of September 30, 2009. It includes children who turned 18 between October 1, 2008 and September 30, 2009 (5.26% of the FFY 2009 foster care population). It also includes children for whom (for reasons specified previously) the county *may* not be able to enter visits into MRS (all together, only 5.79% of the FFY 2009 population). In a few cases where one of these children was the subject of a CPS Assessment prior to the current placement episode, and a "210 record" was established in MRS, it could be possible to record caseworker visits in MRS, even though the current placement episode is the result of voluntary relinquishment or placement, etc. It is important to note that, when considering the children on this list, if data impacting Placement Authority Begin and End Dates was entered after September 30, 2009, it would not be reflected in this report. Any such changes made after September 30, 2009 and before 5:00 PM on November 30, 2009 will be reflected in the final data submission to ACF.

The detailed report also includes three sections of data regarding months in care and visits recorded in MRS. For a complete description of the report, including an explanation of how the Measure 1 and 2 scores are calculated, refer to the attachment to this letter.

Counties should be able to use these reports to:

- A) Determine if visits need to be entered into MRS (provided they were made). To do this, inspect the report for any children with a "1" (meaning "Yes") in Col. AR (labeled "Denominator") and a "0" (meaning "No") in Col. AS (labeled "Visited Each and Every Full Month in Care"). Then look at Cols. O through Z (which indicate for those full months the child was in care, the months at least one visit has been recorded in MRS) and compare to Cols. C through N (which indicate the months that the child was in care for a full month) to determine which months are missing visits. You can also compare values in Cols. AN (labeled "Full Mos in Care") and AO (labeled "Full Mos Visit") to see how many months for which visits are missing by subtracting the value in Col. AO from Col. AN. A good strategy is to work the cases with only one month short first, and then move to two months short, etc.

B) Determine (if time allows and you have at least met your Measure 1 target) for what children you may be able to enter “In-Home” visits. To identify these children, compare the values in Col. AV (labeled “Visit Months Visited in Home”) to those in Col. AT (labeled “Visit Months”). For any child where the value in Col. AV is less than the value in Col. AT, determine if additional “in-Home” visits can be entered into MRS. Compare the values in Cols. AA through AL (which indicate for those full months the child was in care, the months where at least one visit in the home of the child was recorded in MRS) to those in Cols. O through Z (which indicate for those full months the child was in care, the months at least one visit was recorded in MRS) to determine specific months that are missing “In-Home” visits.

Counties should try to use these reports to improve your Measure 1 score, and if possible, your Measure 2 score, by correcting data in CPPS and/or entering any missing visit data into MRS between now and November 30, 2009. The State will not be issuing any more detailed reports for preliminary data, but you should be able to use the third query in CSDW “**Children In Foster Care and Corresponding FC Visits for Specific Month - Detail Report**” to check your progress on a daily basis if desired.

Thank you for all your work in this regard. Together we should be able to improve our FFY 2009 scores and hopefully meet our Measure 1 target, avoiding further penalties.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at Hank.Bowers@dhhs.nc.gov or PM-REM staff at 919-733-4530.

Sincerely,



Hank Bowers, Chief
Performance Management/Reporting &
Evaluation Management Section

HB/

Attachment

cc: Sherry Bradsher
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