

MRS Conference Call Notes
March 2009

Counties Participating 3/18: Bladen, Caswell, Franklin, Gaston, Graham, Greene, Macon, New Hanover, Person, Rowan, Wake, Wilkes, Yadkin.

Counties Participating 3/26: Alleghany, Beaufort, Brunswick, Catawba, Cleveland, Davidson, Davie, Durham, Forsyth, Gaston, Gates, Harnett, Lee, Northampton, Perquimans, Randolph, Rockingham, Surry, Washington.

Counties Participating 3/31: Alamance, Anson, Caswell, Durham, Gaston, Halifax, Hoke, Jackson, McDowell, Mecklenburg, Nash, Pitt, Union, Vance, Wilson.

Announcements from Raleigh

Presentation of CPS issues in Licensed Out of Home Placements

Reminder regarding Focus Groups for Foster Teens

Any remaining questions regarding the CFT Documentation tool

News from Raleigh

- At the request of counties, the Division continues to send out correspondence via DCD letters only twice a month. Several communications went out on the 16th.
 - One-line technology survey – ask that all workers be allowed to participate in this survey. Only takes about 10 minutes to complete.
 - Safe Surrender – a reminder that when this occurs counties still have the obligation to do a CPS assessment regardless of whether or not the identity of the parents is known. And you need to complete the 5104 correctly. Anecdotally we have about 11 safe surrenders but the Central Registry shows only 1 this year.
 - Pre-approval from ICPC office is no longer necessary for international adoptions but you still have to have the pre-placement assessment forwarded to the Immigration office.
 - Division changes in the ICPC Division office.
 - Out of state reports of neglect and perpetrators clarification. This will be incorporated into the revised Chapter 5 when it comes out.
 - New federal legislation regarding federal adoptions – effective immediately.
 - Change notices regarding Intensive Family Preservation services and Reunification services.
 - Admin Letter regarding Fostering Connections
- Letters that went out on the 31st (part of 31st phone call only)
 - Update on Statewide Program Improvement Plan.
 - Increase in funding for LINKS.
 - Transitioning the NCKids adoption exchange back to the Division.

CPS Issues in Licensed Out of Home Placements

Presentation by Division Staff: Rita Bland, Terri Reichert, Rhoda Ammons, Tara Foster, and Cindy Norton. Powerpoint of this presentation was sent out over the mrs listserve.

The Black Mountain office is the headquarters for Regulatory and Licensing Services. (2 licensing consultants, 3 assistants, and 5 field licensing consultants who are home based with territories, Rita (Program Manager) and Team Leader, Bob Hensley)

- There are 7,000 licensed foster homes in our state.
- 44% supervised by DSS, 56% are licensed by private agencies.
- 103 private childcare placing agencies in NC, 13 maternity homes, 79 residential child care facilities.

The Powerpoint Presentation:

Slide #2 - Why is this important?

- Prompt action to ensure the protection of all children in licensed care
- Transparent communication with all parties
- Minimize disruptions of all placements
- Value placement providers
- Standardized procedures for consistent practice
- Case building for licensure actions

Slide #3 – Chapter 5 requires....

- The **DSS-5282, Notification of CPS Case Decision**, effective 09/07 is to be used when conducting an assessment of licensed child caring facilities or foster homes.
- Revisions (as a result of the work group) to this form are expected.

Slide #4 – Chapter V reads....

- Definitions: Out of home CPS assessments are those involving children in foster homes; public and private group homes; child caring institutions; boarding schools; and DHHS facilities, includes licensed facilities by the Division of Health Services Regulation (DHSR), formerly known as the Division of Facility Services (DFS).
- For further information on facilities included in this definition, refer to the chart provided in Chapter V, CPS assessments.
 - The DSS-5282 is also used to notify DCD when you complete an assessment on a child development center.
 - Boarding schools are not included (these are licensed by the Office of Education Services), Juvenile Justice facilities are. We anticipate some clarification of which facilities are included and which are not with the next revision of Chapter V.
 - If you are not sure who issues a license, ask the facility who issued it, ask to see a copy of it (and you should be able to tell). Mental Health licensed start with the initials MHL and then the license number.

Slide #5 – Chapter V reads (continued)

- The DSS-5282 is required to be used upon the *receipt* of a report on a licensed child caring facility or foster home AND upon *conclusion* of an assessment on a licensed

child caring facility or foster home. (The contact information for the different licensing authorities is located at the top of the form.)

- Policy requires that the initial submission of the DSS-5282 occur within 5 business days of the initial report and notification of the case decision occur within 5 business days of the case decision.

Questions -

- Black Mountain is thinking of dropping the requirement for submitting the initial report to Licensing and Regulatory Services because they do not act on this report (CPS does) they wait until a decision has been made. However, DHSR will still want it because it is a trigger for them. So, asked the counties if it was more important to be consistent or possibly save submitting one report?
 - Counties that spoke up wanted it to be consistent so that nothing fell through the cracks.
- Had a question about the facilities that DSS does not get involved and do assessments in. Determined that Terri would be the best person to address this and she was not on the 3/26 call. Holly will email her comments to the group.

Slide #6 – Did you know????

The 5282 was created in 2007 and they began tracking its use in 2008. So these statistics do not include some of the first year of the form, and also only include reports on foster homes, not other types of facilities

- Only 29 counties have used this form since it's creation
- Only 1 county routinely utilizes the form appropriately
- 10% of the initial notifications received were late.

Slide #7 – Did you know (continued)????

- Only 10% of the case decisions on an out of home placement are reported as being staffed with the CPR.

Slide #8 – Chapter V reads.....

- Out of home placement assessments are to be staffed with the CPR, by the county conducting the assessment.
- The staffing shall occur after all involved counties have discussed the findings and the case decision is ready to be made. This should occur prior to reporting a case decision to the Division on the DSS-5104.
- The CPR's role shall be to provide guidance that ensures the assessment is thorough, and that counties are clear about the difference between licensing issues and true CPS issues.
 - Some confusion about which cases should be staffed with the CPR.
 - Asked if it was required to staff day care facilities assessments with CPR – it is not.

Slide #9 – When the CPR is not consulted we have found the following:

- Sometimes the *Family Assessment Track* is used. Policy requires that these types of assessments are conducted as *Investigative Assessments* with a finding to substantiate or unsubstantiate.
 - Under the guidance of the Division attorney – these should always be done as a investigative assessments, even if the foster child is no longer in the home and there are only biological children there at the time of the assessment.

Slide #10 – When the CPR is not consulted (continued)

- 17 % of case decisions reported to the DSS licensing office were family assessment findings.
- Rationale for the case decision is not documented sufficiently.
- Foster parents are held to a different standard when policy indicates they should be treated the same as parents.
 - Example: when foster parents are substantiated for using corporal punishment because this is not allowed in licensure rules. This is a licensing issues, but it may not rise to the level of a substantiation and if you had seen the same action from a biological parent they would not have been substantiated.

Slide #11 – When the CPR is not consulted (continued)

- Foster children are automatically removed from a foster home without justification of risk. As a result some serious reports are unsubstantiated or screened out just because the child has been removed from the home.
- Less than 10% of notifications submitted to the DSS licensing office have documentation that a CPR was consulted for the case decision.

Questions –

- Who completes the 5282? – The CPS worker.
- Incident report – private agencies are required to complete a critical incident report if CPS conducts an assessment in their facility.
- Foster home attempting to be relicensed an investigation completed within the last year and the neighboring county who did the investigation has not completed the forms as of yet – how will that affect their relicensing attempts?
 - Provide as much info as possible about the CPS involvement. That alone will not prevent them from getting licensed. The county director will need to send in a letter of support.
 - Even if it was unsubstantiated please send as much information as possible. Sometimes an unsubbed case has licensing issues (such as corporal punishment) although not always.

Slide #12 – Did you know????

- 86% of the notifications of the case decision were late (more than 5 business days from the date of the case decision).
- 58% of CPS case decisions regarding foster homes or facilities were made more that 30 days from the date of the report, including some that were made more than *6 months*

from the date of the report. There can be significant implications for the safety of children and the foster parents for a delay in a making a case decision.

- Delaying a case decision also delays the creation and implementation of a corrective action plan by the licensing office. (They will follow up to ensure that the issues that led to the substantiation are resolved and prevent them from happening again.)
- When there is a substantiation on a foster home, Black Mountain has started doing a report. The purpose of this is to look at trends, policy and practice, and to ultimately support foster parents.
- When the DSS-5282 is submitted, often the rationale for a case decision is incomplete.

Slide #13 – Instructions on the DSS-5282

- The North Carolina Case Decision Summary (DSS-5228) is to be attached to the DSS-5282 and will serve as notification of the case decision.
 - A copy of the entire North Carolina Case Decision Summary (DSS-5228) should be included. Often they only get a part of it.

Slide #14 – Did you know????

- It is permissible to share information with the licensing authority regarding the assessment. For notification to DHSR or DCD the name of the reporter would need to be removed.

Slide #15 – Chapter V reads.....

- Note: It is permissible for the County Director of Social Services to share information and a summary of documentation from the case record without a court order with public or private agencies or individuals that are being utilized to provide or facilitate the provisions of protective services to a child.

Questions –

- Does DSS have access to information about private foster homes – would DSS know if there has been previous CPS history within that home?
 - The Black Mountain office can tell you if there has been any negative licensure action in the past. They would not have a list of all the CPS actions.
- Does a group home case go to Black Mountain or just DHSR?
 - Depends on who licensed it.
- One county tweaked the form and added additional items – is this ok?
 - Yes if you added stuff, but you cannot remove items.
- Since Black Mountain is supposed to be notified at the beginning and the end, are the questions to be answered at the end, somewhat confusing.
 - Yes, some of the questions do not make sense if you are answering at the beginning
 - Suggestion made to have a check box added to the form so that you can check if it is initial notification and then they would know why you didn't answer all the questions.

- Do we have a projected date for the revision of this form?
 - Trying to go to Children's Services in the Spring and get feedback and then give counties a 30 day notice before implementing the changes, so probably not until at least June.

Slide #16 – For more Information

- Please refer to the Family Services Manual, Volume 1, Chapter V. Jurisdiction in Child Welfare for specific guidance.

Slide #17 – Directory and Contact Information

- Regulatory & Licensing Services: 952 Old US Highway 70, Black Mountain, NC 28711 Phone (828) 669-3388.
- Child Welfare Policy Consultation Team: 325 N. Salisbury St. Raleigh, NC Phone (919) 733-4622.

Focus Groups for Foster Teens

For a copy of this survey please check the mrs email of 3/16, or contact Holly McNeill or Candice Britt.

- These should be completed by the Director this month.
- In December 2008 a DCD was sent out detailing requirements for face-to-face focus groups with older foster youth.
- Candice has received lots of positive feedback about these groups.
- Halifax county offered a CPU opportunity for the foster parents during the same time frame and that way afterward the parents, youth and the Director all had a chance to mingle.

Follow up questions to the CFT documentation tool:

- Once county asked who is completing what:
 - For some counties the person(s) on the call did not know. Others had these responses: social worker completely, social worker and facilitator as an equal team, social worker does prep and facilitator does the rest (several versions of this, which seemed to be most common).
- This form is not to document the plan that comes out the meeting nor to replace the Family Services Agreement, which is what the family should leave with. This form is for the dictation that goes in your file. It can be shared with the family but is intended for a documentation purpose.

Training related questions:

- Counties have noticed that with the travel restrictions that they are having more trouble getting in trainings. It seems that some training centers go on first come first serve, and others go by county. Counties are trying to save on travel by sending people together to save on mileage and hotel and often are not able to do this.
 - Holly pointed out that we have actually always done first come, first served with the caveat that if one county sends in 20 requests, they won't be able to allow

that county to have all the slots. Its just probably more noticeable now that there are restrictions.

- If new trainings are added, Holly will try to put them out over the list-serve.
- Is there a possibility of hosting a first year training in one county if they have a large number of people that need them?
 - Can always call and ask but know that the State Division has the same staffing issues that counties do and we may not be able to accommodate.

Next Month: Phone calls will be April: 14th, 29th, and 30th.