

MRS Conference Call Notes
April 2009

Counties Participating 4/14: Anson, Buncombe, Cumberland, Dare, Durham, Gaston, Pitt, Mecklenburg, Nash, Union, Wake, Watagua

Counties Participating 4/16: there was no one available to take notes on this call

Counties Participating 4/22: there was no one available to take notes on this call

Announcements from Raleigh

A discussion of how staff and agencies are keeping with documentation in all areas, what are some of the strategies you see working with your staff. Plus, how do the following impact both the quality and timeliness of documentation: CPS Assessment Documentation Tool, CFT Documentation Tool, Foster Care visitation tool, Thorough completion of the 5104 and 5106

News from Raleigh

- Letters
 - March 17th
 - Clarifications of Safe Surrender (including proper way to complete 5104).
 - No longer need pre-approved letters for international adoption.
 - Change in assignment in ICPC cases (which consultants assigned to each counties).
 - March 30
 - Increase in funding availability in funding for LINKS.
 - Transition of NC Kids back into the Division.
 - Update on PIP.
- Several months ago the CPS policy team merged with the foster care policy team. That team leader position has now been filled by Patrick Betancourt.

CPS Documentation

Would like identify the barriers but not dwell on them. Concentrate on how we can overcome the issues with keeping documentation up to date. Most people have at least one or two workers that find a way to stay caught up for the most part.

What are barriers? Is it worse over the last year or so? What does it look like?

- Counties feel like they are always struggling. Documentation is up to date but always almost drowning.
- One county has started having these little notebooks that they can type on (neodes?) but its awkward to type while you are sitting with the client.
- One county has found that when caseloads are in line with the standards people can keep up, but when they fall behind is when they get an overload of cases. This county has laptops with forms on them. They were encrypted and this allows them to use time when they are waiting (such as in court) to keep up to date. May plan some time between visits to update the first visit on their laptop before they go to a second visit.

(There was some concern about the laptops before they were encrypted, but it was worthwhile to get this done.)

- Lots of serious cases lately for one county (law enforcement, etc. involvement) and the amount of documentation is extensive.
- Counties feel that there is more and more and more being asked of us and they know that this is coming from the Feds. Their understanding is that we just listen to the Feds, there is no dialog, we just do it if they (Feds) say so. Is this a correct perception?
 - Holly pointed out that, yes, some of these requirements come from the Feds, but the Division also sees them as things that are good for our families, so don't want to lay all this on the Feds. Some things may have started there, but the Division realizes some things are good ideas. However, there are some things that come from the feds that are non-negotiable.
 - Also keep in mind that there is always a learning curve with new documentation. Part of the problem right now is that there is a lot of new paperwork all at once, so the learning curve is high. Although much of this documentation may eventually make things easier, it is a lot to have new at the same time.
- One county gives their people one day (periodically) to work at home, but at the end of the day they have to turn in their work so that their supervisor can see that they did work while they were at home.
- Workers are concerned about the redundancy – for the new CPS documentation tool much of the info is already in the intake. Some of the assessment tools could be combined into one form so you don't have to do that top part except one time.
- IZZY – there are still some kinks in the system. It is very helpful as they can go in and check on it at any point, but they still need the time to sit down and do it. All workers in Buncombe have laptops and when they have downtime they are doing documentation.
- Does it hinder engagement if workers are at a visit and are trying to document (typing) while they are talking.
 - Clients hate that.
 - No one knows of a county who actually types while with a client, although they may go out right afterward to a parking lot or someplace and do documentation.
- Problem with home days is that in small counties is that people are at home and then they get calls and there are no assessors in the office
- Larger county takes assessors off rotation for 2 days in a row every 6 weeks or so and they are able to get about 6 to 8 cases a day done.
- One county does a “bubble” week. They come off the log for a week. It does create more work on the remaining ones, but it all goes around. They have been taking their laptop into an interview room and work there so they are not distracted by the noise of the cubicles.
- Blended job function – Mecklenburg found that workers are better able to manage their job functions with the blended. They were initially afraid that the in-home contracts would not get made. They are not getting a case every day and are better able to manage the work. Caseload size is about 15 (assessment and treatment together – do not allow treatment cases to go over 5). They also take their workers out of rotation for a week at a time.
 - A lot of this goes back to supervision issues as well. The supervisor has to make sure that the worker uses their protected time to the best advantage, maybe talk

with the worker about it to determine what the priority is. Also, if someone has a really involved complicated treatment case, make an exception and take them out of rotation.

- One county trying a pilot with a hospital where they have one social workers assigned to the hospital and will take all assessment from the hospital. If this works, the hospital will eventually fund this position.
- One other county uses interns from the Collaborative but is concerned if the Collaborative goes away.
- Holly heard of one county that made a rule that from 8-10 in the morning people were supposed to be in their office working on documentation unless otherwise approved by their supervisor. When this rule was really enforced it worked. There are not many collaterals or visits you can make during that time.
- One county is having workers putting in their appointment book, just like a visit, the protected time. Their supervisor will handle any emergency comes up.
- There is no concrete training for staff on what to document. Feds want to see outcomes, social workers are good at documenting process. In the end it would probably behoove DSS to develop a documentation curricula. Its really trial by fire to figure out what level of detail needs to go in there. Supervision is also critical. Mecklenburg has a policy that if an investigations caseload gets to 25 there has to be an action plan.
- Holly has heard that for assessments in some counties you have to have your documentation ready to present for staffing for case decision.
- Yes = Pitt, Union, Watauga (just started)
- No = Anson, Dare, Nash
- Not sure (because of the position of the person on the call) = Buncombe, Durham
- Wake – forms filled out, but documentation does not have to be turned in for 3-5 additional days
- Mecklenburg – inconsistent across managers
- Sometimes leads to cases being open for 3 or 4 months waiting on documentation, others have their paperwork sooner. It is human nature to live up to the minimum required of you.

What about foster care?

- Tools get done and the documentation comes later. One county the workers actually asked the supervisor to establish a due date for the documentation.
- Other county implemented something similar – they need to hand in on Monday all the previous week's documentation.
- Other county is supposed to have all documentation for the previous month in by the 5th of the following month.
- Some counties will authorize comp time to catch up.
- Other counties will allow workers to come in for 4 hours on Saturday morning to catch up.
- Important if you are doing things 'outside the box' need to make sure that the time is being used well and for what it is intended.

- Some of the new tools, CPS assessment, foster care visitation tool, Holly has heard from new workers that they find it really helpful because they know clearly what needs to be included. Wondering, after the learning curve how do counties feel about it.

CPS Assessment Tool

- Workers complain that it skips around a lot and does not flow logically but it is helpful for the supervisor and workers to review together to make sure they get everything.
- Other county likes it, but they have made some local variations to speed up the completion of the form a little bit.

Foster Care Visitation Tool

- Shorter version (revision) much more appreciated. The contact records were helpful for county who just had a CFSR.
- Like having something to hand out to the licensing worker and others who may be involved.

CFT Tool

- This made the workers conduct the CFT meeting as they should be.

Questions -

Concern with combining CFTs with PPAT

- Another agency just had this discussion. Lots of them are scheduling time right before or after the meeting. This saves time for the people that have to be at both but also keeps the CFT as the family's meeting.
- Other counties have had no problems making it the same meeting, and have not had any issues with the families not wanting the GAL there.
- Has anyone held them during adoptions?
- How are other counties doing staffing for case decision – supervisor & worker or team?
- Team = Anson, Dare, Wake, Cumberland
- Both ways = Buncombe, Pitt, Wake, Union, Nash