

MRS Conference Call Notes
November 2010

Counties Participating 11/15:

Buncombe, Cartaret, Davidson, Gaston, Nash, Northampton, Scotland, Yadkin.

Counties Participating 11/23:

Chatham, Chowan, Durham, Greene, Orange, McDowell, Person, Pitt, Surry.

Counties Participating 11/30: Alamance, Cartaret, Caswell, Chowan, Graham, Hoke, Lee, Macon, Scotland, Union, Washington.

Feedback from each of the calls is included under each section, but is not broken out by each call as it frequently is.

Agenda

Announcements from Raleigh

Parallel Process

Checking in on the Documentation Tool

What part do Administration and Agencies play in CFTs?

What does engaging our community partners look like?

News from Raleigh

Letters:

- 11/1 - The funding survey came out. The deadline is 11/30.
- Heather shared the news that as a state we have exceeded our federal benchmarks for foster care visits.
- 11/15 – Due to budget issues, the Division will be closing the Kinston regional training center at the end of the year.
- 11/16 – Report on the progress on the work we have been doing on Fostering Connections. Very detailed letter so if you don't feel like you have a good understanding of fostering connections this letter is a good summary of what we have been doing.
- 11/16 – The Adoptions Promotion program. Several attachments.
- 11/18 – A correction to one of the attachments on the Adoption Promotion programs.
- Note from Candice - The Division did a survey around Supervision and what staff felt made good supervision in 2009. There were a large number of responses which made data analysis a challenge. However that information should be released in December and hoping to make some recommendations around supervision based on the results of the survey.

Child and Family Team Meetings

- CFTs are one of the biggest and most important strategies that we have as you think about partnering and engaging families. Says to families and community partners that we value their input.
- Holly shared that she thinks we are doing a good job with the broad function of CFT's but challenges us to think about how we can deepen the implementation and develop the finer aspects of CFTs.
- Must remember that not all meetings with the parents are CFTs. We have to be picky and stick to the real definition, or when we try to evaluate them

- and determine how useful they are and how they perform we will not get accurate results. If we are counting meetings as CFTs that are really not, then it waters down the apparent effectiveness of them.
- Still need to work on ensuring that the initial mention of the CFT is made during the assessment, at the first indication that the case might go to 215. The concept of a CFT is not easy for a family to grasp and see it as something other than talking about all their problems and 'beating them up'. Also it is not easy to pull all the people together, especially the families supports, and having as much time as possible will be helpful.
 - Some counties have tried to have a CFT at the 7 day visit – 7 days after the case decision. This is a great goal and if you can put together a really good CFT in this short amount of time, that is fantastic, but don't rush the CFT and shortchange it. If you need to wait, you have 21 more days, and it is better to wait and maximize preparation time to get the most benefit out of the meeting.
 - Preparing for and logistics of CFTs - the preparation for the meeting is just as important as the meeting itself.
 - Remember that there is some guidance in Chapter 7 of policy (p. 16-17) that you can use to help prepare.
 - It is not just the family that needs to be prepared but anyone who will be there needs to understand the specifics of this meeting, what their specific role is, and the ground rules for the meeting.
 - When you talk about the CFT, use plain language and the specifics of this family. (Leave off acronyms – the may confuse the family!)
 - Supervisors and social workers also need to prepare and be honest with themselves about their biases and hot-button issues and determine how you are going to best leave those outside the room. This includes the staff's ideas about what the family should do. It is their meeting and we need to let them come up with their own plan, and if we have an agenda we may unconsciously discourage a family's plan.
 - Agency should be talking to Community Partners on an ongoing basis about what CFTs are and how they can be an important part of these meetings.
 - Also the agency should ensure staff are prepared – this includes appropriate trainings, and sharing information within the agency (i.e. neutral locations that have worked well for CFTs in the past when a family doesn't have an idea of where they want to have it.)
 - Glad to hear that many agencies are using private family time. If you think you might do this, prepare the family and let them know that you will be doing this so it is not a surprise.
 - When you end the meeting it is helpful to get some feedback. Some do surveys, but some verbal feedback at the close of a meeting is helpful.
 - There is some confusion of when CFTs are required in Foster Care – run along the same time as PPATs – only variation is that CFT due within 30 days of child coming into placement.
 - Basically any time that policy requires you to update the service agreement that is when you should have a CFT because that is the method for updating this.
 - GAL's – frequently families are very resistant to have them at their meeting. Bottom line is that is the family's choice but let them know that

- the GALs have access to all the information about the family's case so wouldn't they rather speak directly to the GAL and listen to them so the communication is firsthand both ways.
- Facilitators – remember that anyone who is facilitating High Risk CFTs must attend the Anchor's Away training, even if they are from outside DSS and have facilitation experience.
 - Would like to see an increase use of mentors or family partners – people who have been through the CPS system themselves and have had CFTs that can help explain it to the families.
 - CFT Documentation tool – documents the entire process (talking with the family about the meeting, preparing for the meeting and the actual meeting), not just the event of the CFT itself.
 - This is likely not going to be completely filled out by the same worker, may have multiple workers who fill out parts of this form.
 - Should not be done completely at the actual meeting.
 - One county asked – how other counties are handling the issue of having an independent facilitator on high risk cases – where are the lines being drawn between who is involved in the case and who is not – if you don't have a facilitator, who do you use? Can you use another worker in the same unit? Does that count as “independent?”
 - One county uses a worker who has never touched the case in any way.
 - Another county usually uses the after hours worker but for her cases they contract out.
 - Question was asked if workers facilitating moderate risk cases had to have the training.
 - According to policy, no, but it is strongly recommended.
 - One county made a social worker a designated facilitator and substantially reduced her caseload and this is very helpful.
 - Another created a full time facilitator position, and she trained all staff starting with 215 staff, now everyone on board and they are at the point where they are fine tuning it.
 - One county is now doing more CFTs during the assessment phase - wanted to know if Holly could talk about how these were different.
 - Still need to be careful to make these meet the family's needs. A CFT meeting during an assessment might be to develop a safety plan, or if you have a case with divorced parents calling back and forth, or grandparents calling in, you may have a CFT around that if the family sees it as an issue. Again, if the family does not want meet around this issue, it is a meeting, but not a CFT.
 - The biggest difference in assessments, is that there is still a finding hanging over their head so the family may not be as comfortable as they are after the finding has been made, because anything we hear during the meeting will go into our decision making process. (However note that this is not always a bad thing, some things we hear at the meeting may actually mitigate their situation.)

CFT meeting Success Story.....Case had been in-home for years, then in foster care for 2 years. At the beginning most of the professional staff thought that the mom would not be successful at reunification. However, the mother got to where she would basically facilitate her own team meeting – she told the therapist what

she wanted to work on, she told the intensive in-home services worker what she wanted to work on, she recognized that the team was going to lose the facilitator and guardian at litem, and she stepped into that role. Her children are back home, and doing very well. She wanted to have a final CFT that was sort of a “Reunification Celebration”

Parallel Process – one of the best ways to teach our staff to use the shared decision making model. Anything that counties are doing that allows the staff to have a say in the way things are done – similar to the ways we ask families to figure out what works best for their family within guidelines, what are counties doing to ensure that their staff have input into agency policies and procedures.

- Holly is working on some guidelines to help you think about this area, but she is not done yet. So, what are counties doing?
- When they have work-flow issues the supervisors sit down together and talk about how they think the best way to do it, instead of the program manager arbitrarily making the decision and telling everyone else how it will be.
- Supervisors also do that with their workers within the team (for example if someone is out on leave, talk about as a group how they will cover it instead of randomly assigning things.)
- A 109 social worker was having trouble managing her workload so she called a CFT for herself. More experienced social workers were her supports, her supervisor was there, as well as some workers with less experience, and at the end of the CFT they decided to develop a work group to look at workplace practices.
- Quarterly meetings where any issues are brought up and staff are comfortable discussing these and the best ways to deal with them.

Documentation Tool - this has been out for awhile so wanted to hear questions or comments.

- Holly hears a lot of confusion as to what this tool is for. People say it is hard to fill it out all during the meeting so that they can give a copy to the family – although you can do that, it is not mandatory that you do this, it documents the entire process of the meeting and you do not have to give to family. For example, the first one will go from the initial mention during assessment to the close of the first meeting. The second tool will pick up after the first meeting, etc. It documents all the people that are talked to, etc. Will most likely be filled out by multiple workers.
- We are not trying to make double work for you to document here and in the narrative – this is part of the narrative.
- Only by documentation can we tell if policy is being followed. If we cannot look at the documentation and determine if policy was followed and if CFTs were being done correctly, we cannot evaluate them in North Carolina.
- One county was freaking out trying to fill out the form in a meeting until they were reminded that this tool was not supposed to be completed during the meeting. Up to Field 17 should be filled out before the meeting!
- One county added a couple of fields and use it as a referral and worker must send the tool to the facilitators before the meeting (first 17 fields of the form.)

- Useful to lay out clearly what issues will be discussed at this particular meeting.
- Also helpful to set the date for the next meeting at the current meeting.

How are counties engaging Community Partners?

- One county has a regular meeting of all child serving agencies, and in that meeting once a quarter they talk about issues that arise regarding having successful CFT's. The group is planning to use some money from the LME to hire a CFT coach to have an outside person to observe and give them feedback and teach them how to facilitate more effectively.

General Questions/Comments

One county is seeing a lot of people due to the economy that don't have lights, or other things, which is more a poverty issue than neglect. On the intake side, they have done a good job with hooking people up with shelters etc, but she wonders if any other counties are having CPS issues due to the poverty resulting from the economy and how they might be able to prevent this from becoming a bigger CPS issue in the not-too-distant future?

- Consider taking this to the community child protection team to see what as a community they can do before it becomes a significant CPS issue.
- Remember that although lights are very nice, if the children are warm, fed, and healthy just lack of lights, etc. is not a CPS issue
- The county said it has not gotten overwhelming for CPS as of yet, and families are really working around things, one with no electricity was keeping food in coolers and children were fed and warm.
- Collaborate with other service providers and exchange resource lists – do it repeatedly as these may be updated frequently.

If you have an absent parent that has no needs identified because they were not a part of the CPS issue, we are required to include them, but if the parent who was the cause of the CPS report does not want them there, how do they deal with that conflict and have a true CFT?

- It is a CFT meeting, not a "Child and part of family" team meeting. Need to have some discussion with custodial parent about how we can determine what is the best way to work together for the best interest of the child.
- Of course, if the absent parent presents a safety issue to the child or the custodial parent, that is different, and may need to have separate meetings.
- Maybe don't have non-custodial parent there, but that parent's mom (child's grandma – perhaps custodial parent can get along w/ grandma better than their ex.)
- No one solution as it will depend on the specifics on each family.

One county wondered if most counties had a facilitator position?

- Not most, some do, many do not. Some contract with outside agency.

No calls in December, see everyone back in January when we will have a new format!! Info to come!!!