

MRS!

INFORMATION IN SUPPORT OF NORTH CAROLINA'S MULTIPLE RESPONSE SYSTEM

Highlights from this Issue: Knocking Down Barriers **1**
Shared Parenting Training Dates **2** Other MRS Training
Dates **3** Substantiations Decline in NC **3** Division
Sponsors Community Meth Forums **4**

January 2006

Knocking Down Barriers

by Holly McNeill

We can all name barriers to fully implementing the Multiple Response System. Taking on a reform of this magnitude is a huge challenge. But that hasn't stopped the counties of North Carolina, which have come up with many ways to knock down barriers and build stronger partnerships. Following are some of the obstacles they have overcome to make MRS a reality.

BARRIER 1: School personnel are not on board. There are many solutions to this universal problem. One county contracted to have their staff trained in family-centered practice (in addition to the state training) and invited school personnel to attend. By helping them understand MRS's six principles of partnership, this county made it easier for their school partners to see why they are doing things the way they are—which worked much better than simply announcing that things are going to be different. While we know that not every county has the ability contract for its own training, any agency can apply this concept by meeting with the schools to discuss the six principles as they relate to MRS.

BARRIER 2: Change is hard for people on staff. This barrier is felt to some extent in all counties. Some staff just have a harder time with the changes that MRS brings. We have heard several great ideas in this area:

Hold an Agency-wide Orientation. One county held a day-long meeting with staff and administration to discuss the philosophical change that MRS would bring and to begin planning to implement MRS. This let staff know that MRS is a priority for their county and gave them a real voice in how MRS will look.

Develop an "AHA!" Policy. Another county has made it a policy to share "AHA" moments. When this county hears a worker talk about a moment when doing things differently worked really well, they make sure that worker shares that experience with the entire staff. Sharing these positive experiences makes change easier for everyone.



continued next page

MRS Meetings

Meetings will be held
from 10 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Eastern

Feb. 23, 2006
Edgecombe Co. DSS
Rocky Mount Branch
301 S. Fairview Rd.
Rocky Mount

Central

Feb. 24, 2006
Randolph Co. DSS
1512 N. Fayetteville St.
Asheboro

Western

Feb. 28, 2006
AB Tech, Enka Campus
Candler

Questions? Contact Holly
McNeil 828/757-5672,
Holly.McNeill@ncmail.net

Training Dates

Shared Parenting

Feb. 22-24
Fayetteville
Contact: Amy Campbell
910/677-0406
(fax) 910/677-0468

March 15-17
Asheville
Contact: Lou Decker
828/670-5050
(fax) 828/670-5053

March 29-31
Kinston
Contact: Betty Williford
252/520-2413
(fax) 252/520-2417

Vol. 1, No. 2 • Jan. 2006

MRS! is published quarterly by the NC Division of Social Services and the Jordan Institute for Families at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Social Work. This issue was created by Tony Troop, John McMahon, and Holly McNeil.

Comments?

Contact Tony Troop, Family Support and Child Welfare Services, NC Division of Social Services, 2412 Mail Service Center, 325 N. Salisbury Street, Suite 735, Raleigh, NC 27699-2412, Courier: 56-20-25, 919/733-4622, Tony.Troop@ncmail.net

Online

www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/mrs

Learn from Those Who Know. Experienced MRS counties are fabulous resources for agencies just getting their feet wet.

Why not hold a retreat for your workers and invite workers and supervisors from an experienced MRS county to talk about the reality of MRS? Another option would be to visit a county that

has already successfully implemented the strategy with which you are struggling. It might even be possible to have your staff shadow one of that county's workers as they implement that strategy, just to see how it works.

BARRIER 3: Increasing Collaboration with Work First. We want counties to be able to tailor MRS to their unique situation and strengths. One county has capitalized on its strengths by sending some Work First staff to pre-service and all the required MRS trainings. Now these workers, who were already qualified to conduct assessments by virtue of their education and experience, can conduct family assessments if they come in on their Work First families. This way family members get to work with someone they know and the agency makes good use of its most valuable resource—staff time and expertise.

BARRIER 4: Worries about increased overtime. Does MRS cause overtime troubles? It depends on how your agency has handled this issue in the past. If you are already making a concerted effort to meet with families when it is convenient for them, MRS will probably not increase staff overtime. MRS counties have found different ways to keep a handle on staff hours. One agency has gone to four 10-hour workdays, in order to give workers more opportunity to meet with clients in the evening.

Another scheduled each worker from 12 PM to 8 PM one day a week so workers can schedule at least some of their evening meetings on that day.

Yet another county has one worker who works from 1 PM to 10 PM and takes all the assists, helping other staff out with late evening appointments or drop-in visits. This may include drug screens. While this person can't do all the evening work, it gives staff in this county an option.

BARRIER 5: Facilitating all those child and family team meetings. This is a concern we have heard loud and clear. Fortunately there are a lot of answers out there. Some that we have heard include:

- Using retired business people (funded through the IV-E waiver in some cases)
- Partnering with local conflict resolution/mediation centers
- Partnering with the faith community
- Using staff as facilitators; this might include Work First/economic assistance staff as well as CPS staff
- Talking with the community about your needs: in one county an agency came up and offered to help with facilitation once they heard about child and family team meetings and how they benefit families

I can't wait to hear the next batch of great ideas! If you have had a great idea or success please let me know so that I can share it with other counties.

County Quote

MRS allows staff to manage their time better. Seeing families all at once leaves more time in the office.

Substantiated Abuse and Neglect Declines in NC

In 2005, North Carolina charted a slight decline in child abuse and neglect reports and investigations, and some declines in the number of children found to be abused or neglected.

In state fiscal year 2004-05, 111,581 children were assessed for child abuse and neglect, a decrease of 1,976 from 2003-04. Of those cases, 20,394 children were found to be abused or neglected, and another 6,276 children were found to need services, for a total of 26,670. These last numbers are not entirely comparable to the year before, because of the rollout of MRS, or the multiple response system of child welfare.

"For years, the total number of children substantiated for abuse and neglect hovered at 31,000 to 32,000. With our new 'multiple response' system approach to assessing reports of abuse or neglect, we're substantiating or serving a total of 26,670. We're engaging families sooner and more intensely upfront, and we believe that is helping to prevent child abuse and neglect," said Jo Ann Lamm, chief, Family Support and Child Welfare Services.

"We're encouraged that the numbers are going down, but we cannot become complacent. Never forget that every number counted is a child harmed."

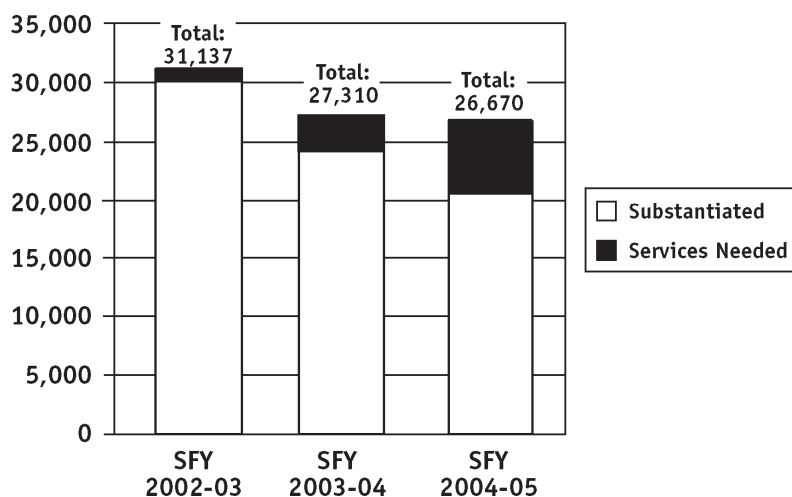
These numbers were released following the release of "New Directions for North Carolina: A Report of the NC Institute of Medicine Task Force on Child Abuse Prevention, 2005," which outlines a number of recommendations to strengthen families and prevent child abuse at the source. This report can be found at <www.nciom.org/projects/childabuse/childabusereport.html>.

A more detailed summary of the data depicted below can be found at <www.dhhs.state.nc.us/pressrel/11-1-05table.pdf>. County statistics can be found at <www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/stats/cr.htm>.



Jo Ann Lamm

Child Maltreatment in NC, SFY 2002-03 to SFY 2004-05: Total Children Substantiated or Found "Services Needed" (Unduplicated)



Training Dates

Cornerstone IIIA: A New Perspective on CPS

Feb. 1-3
Pitt County
Contact: Judy Prophet
704/545-9512
(fax) 704/573-4802

Feb. 14-16
Wilmington
Contact: Donna Pearson
828/433-7187
(fax) 828/430-8762

Feb. 28 - Mar. 2
Marion
Contact: Donna Pearson

March 1-3
Onslow County
Contact: Judy Prophet

March 8-10
Fayetteville
Contact: Donna Pearson

April 4-6
Statesville
Contact: Donna Pearson

Cornerstone IIIB: Partners in Change

Feb. 6-8
Dare County
Contact: Judy Prophet

March 14-16
Albemarle
Contact: Donna Pearson

March 20-22
Kinston
Contact: Judy Prophet

March 21-23
Wilmington
Contact: Donna Pearson

Training Dates

Family-Centered Meeting Learning Events

There are a great many events being offered this fall to train counties in the use of child and family team meetings. Specifically, the Family-Centered Meetings Project at NCSU is offering:

Setting the Stage for Family-Centered Meetings: An Agency and Community Orientation

Caution: Family Meeting Ahead! A Guide for Social Workers Attending Family-Centered Meetings

Anchors Away! How to Navigate Family Meetings: The Role of the Facilitator

The ABC's of Including Children in Family-Centered Meetings

Widening the Circle: Family-Centered Meetings and Safety Issues

County-Specific Transfer of Learning Activities in Support of Family-Centered Meetings

For a complete listing of the dates and locations of these course offerings, consult the Division's training calendar at www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/training/

Division Sponsors Community Meth Forums to Support Collaboration with Law Enforcement

Collaboration between child welfare and law enforcement agencies is an important MRS strategy. Seldom is this collaboration more critical—or more complicated—than when a family is operating a methamphetamine lab in their home.

This spring the NC Division of Social Services is holding a series of one-day community forums to help your community enhance its ability to respond to these situations.

These events will help counties begin the process of creating their own multidisciplinary Drug Endangered Children (DEC) team and their own DEC protocol, which together will ensure they are prepared to respond to drug endangered children in a safe, timely, and effective way.

One of the highlights of these forums will be presentations from members of experienced DEC teams from North Carolina counties. You will have an opportunity to hear directly from those who know what the secrets of success are when it comes to establishing DEC teams and protocols.

County departments of social services are invited to help lead the DEC process in their communities by assembling a five-member team to send to one of these community forums. In addition to one representative from DSS, county DSS's are asked to recruit four other people, each of whom can be from a variety of areas, including law enforcement, EMS, public health, mental health, and many more.

These community forums will be held at the following times and locations. Any county can send a team to participate at any of these events.

Feb. 7, Nash County	March 7, Buncombe County
Feb. 8, Cumberland County	March 8, Cabarrus County
Feb. 9, Orange County	March 9, Guilford County

The deadline to register for the February forums is January 27. The deadline to register for the March forums is February 10. For more information and to register, go to ssw.unc.edu/fcrp/forum.htm or contact Amy Ramirez (919/962-4365, aramirez@email.unc.edu).



Is your county ready to respond to meth labs?

Tips from Experienced Counties for Implementing MRS

- Management needs to passionately embrace the concept of MRS.
- Identify the people who believe in MRS and cultivate them as leaders. You will need a good advocate.
- Be flexible—things will need to be tweaked and changed as you go.
- Do lots of community education! Even so, prepare for initial opposition from other community partners.
- Involve your staff in every step of the process. Meet regularly to get feedback and discuss changes. This promotes buy-in.
- Do what works best for your county.
- Keep an open mind and positive attitude.